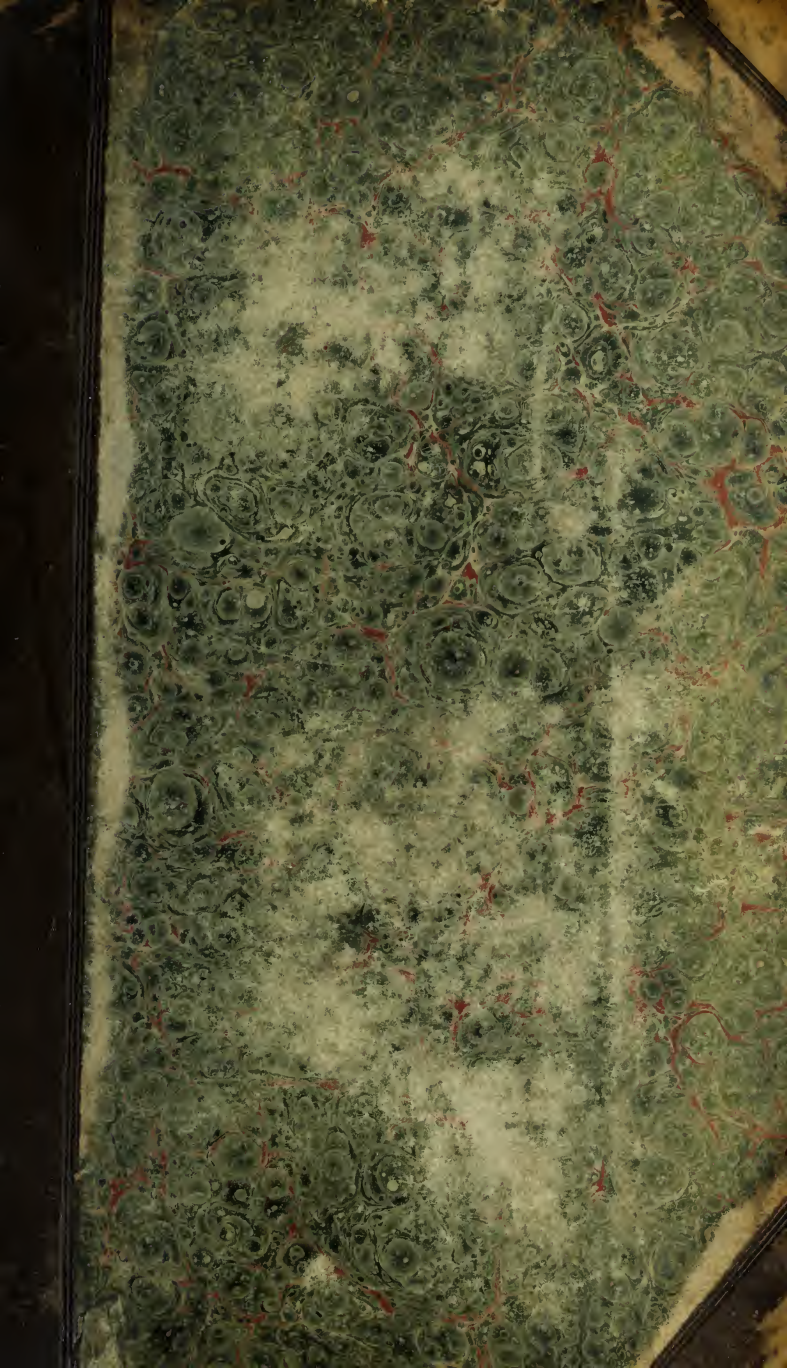
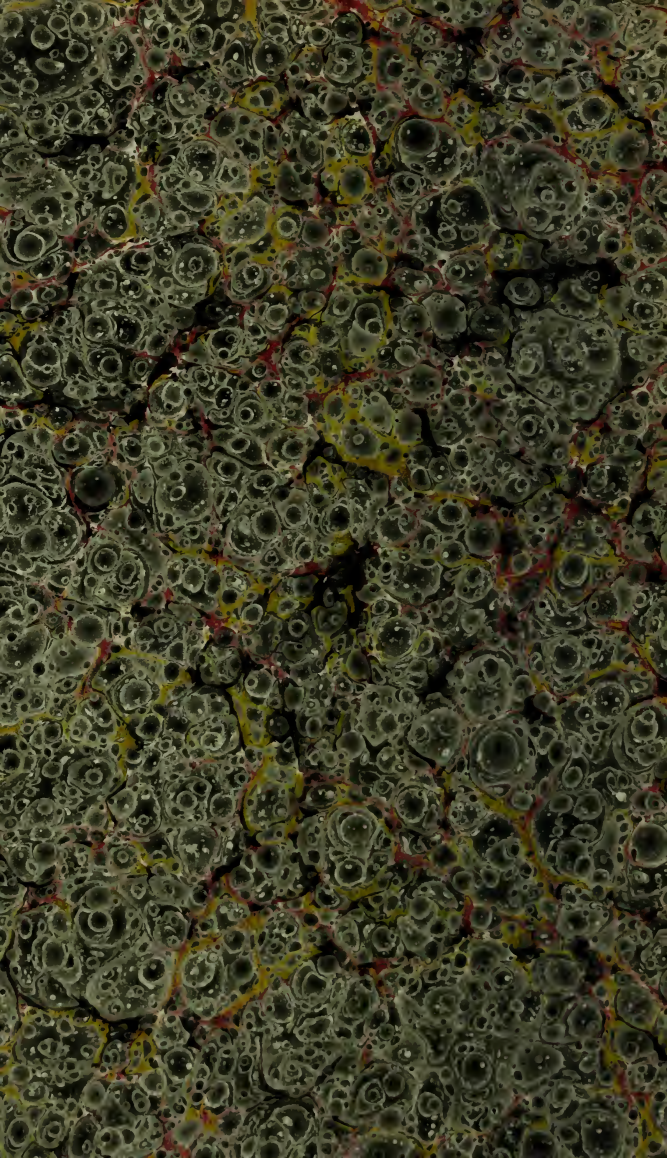
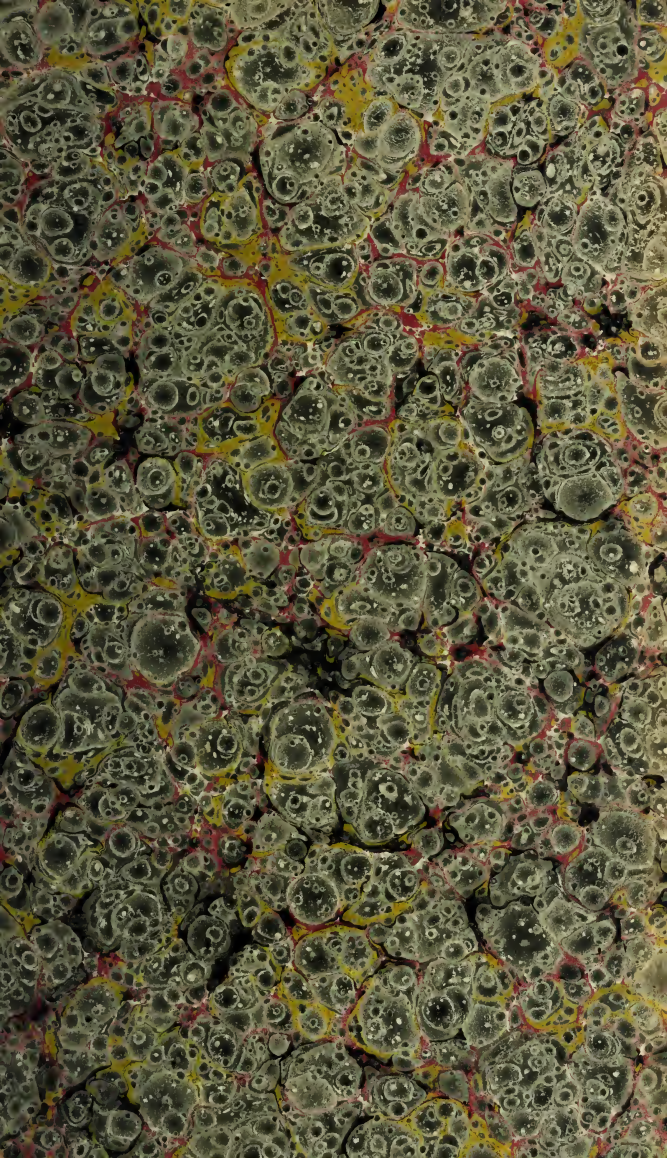








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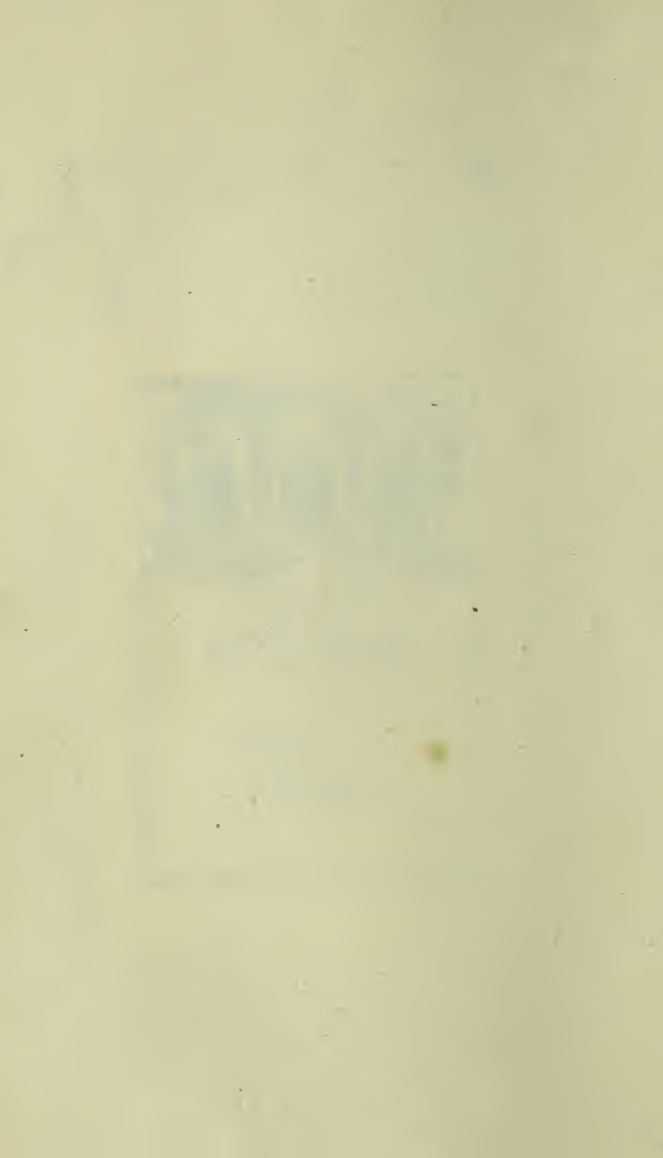
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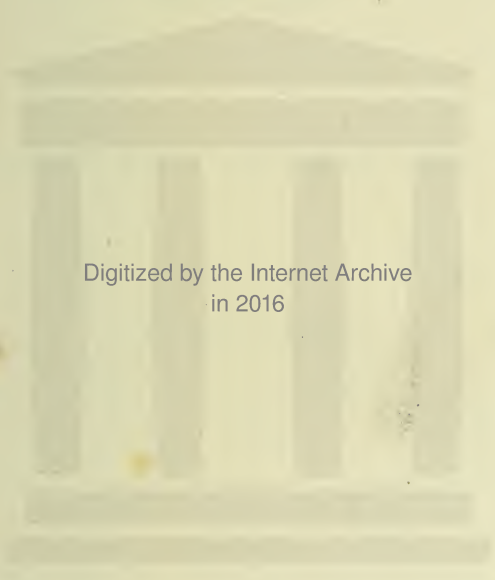


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H. Packer Motyneux.

ESSAYS,
AND
SKETCHES
OF
LIFE AND CHARACTER.

BY A GENTLEMAN
WHO HAS LEFT HIS LODGINGS.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW,

1820.

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PREFACE.

ABOUT a year ago a gentleman, without a servant, took an apartment on the first floor of my house. He was, apparently, a young man; but his look was not diffident and unpractised, like that of most young men, but bold and decided, like the countenance of a lieutenant of hus-sars, who has served a campaign or two, and as piercing as that of an Old Bailey lawyer. He wore long black hair over his forehead, and used some words in his language, which I never saw anywhere but in the Bible and Common Prayer,

and which, I suppose, are now out of use. He took two servants, and began to frequent the world. I observed he went to Almack's, and the French play; was admitted into the Travellers' club, wore stays, and used much starch in his neckcloth. Notwithstanding this, his life was not so regular as that of most young men of fashion. He did not always go out to dinner at a quarter before eight, nor always come home at five in the morning, nor always get up at half-past two in the afternoon. I thought this extraordinary, because I had observed, that those who pretend to any fashion, and claim merit from their want of punctuality, are generally the most exact people possible to be always twenty minutes too late wherever they go. My lodger, on the contrary, very often went out riding upon his return from a ball, and then came and dined by himself, or

with my family, at four or five o'clock : nor was he of the usual placid, indifferent humour, that men of the world generally are. Sometimes a darkness would come over his face, and he would sit frowning at the chimney-piece in his own room for a fortnight together. Every now and then too he would go away for a few days to Dublin or to Edinburgh, without any apparent reason. But, on the 5th of February last, he set out from my house, about twelve at night, saying, he should return in a few days. Since that time I have heard nothing of him ; and being in great want of money to pay my taxes, I went to search, to see if there were any thing I could sell for rent, of which I had not received one farthing. I found a few old clothes, a dozen pair of boots, and a large number of manuscripts : these were written in all kinds of languages, ancient and modern, more

than I had ever heard of: some few were in English; and one called, "On the State of the Constitution," in a totally different hand. I suspect it was written by the gentleman, for there was only one, who used sometimes to pay my lodger a visit. With these papers in my hand, I went off directly to Mr. Longman; and he has given me some hopes that I may recover a part of my rent by their means. Who the author may be, I do not pretend to say; or whether the last paper relates at all to himself: I leave that to the courteous reader; and I beg him to recollect, that I am not answerable for the opinions of a gentleman who has left his lodgings.

JOSEPH SKILLET.

Sackville Street,

May 24. 1820.

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ESSAYS, AND SKETCHES

OF

LIFE AND CHARACTER.

ENGLISH AND FRENCH PRIDE AND VANITY.

WE often hear of the pride of the English. It is in fact the quality which distinguishes them from the nations of the Continent, who are on their side remarkable for vanity. These two passions are the cause of most of the differences which are observed by every passenger from Dover to Calais, in government, in towns, in society, dinners, and dress. Till now, the object of the French people has always been to make their power conspicuous to other nations, even at the expense of liberty

and happiness at home. Such was the basis of their admiration for Louis XIV. and Napoleon; and as long as they could show lace ruffles outside, they did not mind how dirty the shirt was beneath. Even now their zeal for a free constitution, if carefully sifted, will be found to arise very much from the notion that a limited monarchy is the fashion; and they think it would not become the Great Nation not to have as good a Chamber of Deputies, and as much liberty of the press, as their neighbours. The Englishman, on the other hand, absolutely requires that the king should govern according to law; he cannot bear that any one should have a superiority over him beyond what is clearly recognised by the constitution as necessary; his obedience is paid to the magistrate, but his admiration is reserved for virtue and talent.

Look to their buildings. On the Continent you see magnificent public works; but then the money of the state has been disposed of by the will of the monarch, in order to gratify the vanity of his subjects. In England no expense of this kind is borne cheerfully which does not go to

raise something intrinsically useful. The private palaces on the Continent are also much finer than those of England; but in order to show great apartments for receiving company, the nobles submit to live in garrets and ascend common stairs; a lodger gives concerts in the first floor, and an old woman fries pancakes in the entrance. In England, a man of the smallest fortune endeavours to have a house to himself, where he occupies a few low, dark, dull rooms; — but he is independent.

Society on the Continent is one of the greatest luxuries; it is, in fact, an interchange of polite vanity, and as it is itself so great an enjoyment, it constitutes a principal object. But the English, who are proud and reserved, take no pleasure in society, and accordingly they only meet when one of the number can gratify his pride and his hospitality by giving a dinner or a supper. Conversation is then an involuntary obligation, and except over a bottle of wine, which at once heightens the spirits and opens the heart, is seldom enjoyed by the real John Bull. It is in closing to his own fire-side, in excluding all but his own family, in settling him-

self in a large arm-chair, with the consciousness that he is not obliged to entertain any body, that consists the *comfort*, which is the boast of his language and his life. Comfort generally means a great consideration for self, and a total forgetfulness of other people. It is the same attention to comfort, or the same solitary pride, which prevents a *restaurateur* from flourishing in London : a better dinner might then be obtained for half the sum ; but Mr. Bull likes to have a mutton-chop in his own parlour. For the same reason, a town on the Continent is full of reading-rooms, but an Englishman has his newspaper at home ; and whilst a fine day in France brings every living soul out of doors, the haughty tailors and punctilious green grocers of England spend the evening in their close room of six feet square, almost poisoned by the smell of the cheese and apples in the cupboard. If you look at the dress of the islanders and the continentalists, the same difference prevails ; the latter are very gaudy on occasions of display, which they regulate with consummate knowledge and taste ; but at other times they are slovenly, and every one dresses according to his

fancy ; — so that a man who cannot afford finery is admitted into the best society, almost in rags. In England, neither men nor women wear rich clothes ; but the poorest artist, or most wretched author, would be humiliated in thought, if he could not appear at an assembly drest like a duke. Hence that intolerant uniformity of costume, that severe and apparently childish raillery of the least deviation from fashion which is so peculiar to London. And here, by the way, let me enter my protest against this daily and hourly inquisition ; not only are men of the world required to conform to the general costume, but persons who have no pretensions to dress are forced to drill by the fashion of the day. Dandelo does little else in conversation but make sharp and ingenious remarks upon the length of one man's coat, and the colour of another's waistcoat ; and endeavours to be entertaining by noting the variations from the real standard of taste. Of all men living he has the least reason to complain of the Fall, since the transgression of Adam has given him a source of innocent occupation, and the whole stock of his wit.

ENGLISH AND FRENCH TASTE.

I HAVE often wondered at the great difference which is observable in England and France in taste for the beauties of nature. Whilst the English are travelling hundreds of miles for a view of a Scotch or a Swiss lake, and climbing Ben-Nevis or Mont-Blanc, a Frenchman shrugs up his shoulders at the *horreur* of such scenes, and is sufficiently pleased with a parterre of roses, or a clipt lime-tree. At first I attributed the insensibility of the latter to their want of opportunity and town life; but the fact is, they live six months in the country in the finest season (May to October), whilst the English only see their gardens as the flowers begin to fade. Then I believed the French had not reached this important step in the progress of civilisation; but though this may account for the want of taste in the mass, it will not explain the apathy of the readers of Dante, Tasso, Racine,

and Voltaire, to the beauties of nature. The real reason I believe to be the want of depth of soul amongst these people. Taste may be divided into three parts:—1st, Natural taste, which is pleased with bright colours and soft sounds: this is the taste of the savage and the child.

2dly, Thinking taste, or taste of the mind, which is pleased with any effort of intellect, regular walks, and regular sounds: this is the taste of man in progress, of Le Notre in landscape gardening, and Giotto in painting. These two species of taste are common to both nations.

3dly, Feeling taste, or taste of the heart, which connects every thing present with some emotion of its own: this, again, may be subdivided in a thousand ways, which are all comprehended by Mr. Price under the terms Sublime, Beautiful, and Picturesque. Of these three the Frenchman has only an idea of the second; that is to say, he admires scenes which express fertility, richness, order, convenience, splendour, gaiety, or pleasure; but he cannot enjoy, or rather shrinks from those which signify terror, power, majesty, infinity; and he has not studied

nature sufficiently to pay homage to her creation, when they do not accord with convenience or utility.

The feelings of these people are much too light and variable ; the tone of their minds is much too gay and too sociable to take pleasure in the grander views of nature ; they do not love to enter into themselves, to dwell on a gloomy idea, or to conceive a terrible event : they banish the spectacle of death from their stage, and, I believe, would willingly exclude the beetling cliff and the stormy torrent from nature.

MEN OF LETTERS.

Paris.

IT is said that when one of Buonaparte's meanest flatterers, and who is of course one of the meanest flatterers of the present King, was proposing a re-modelling of the Institute, the Emperor answered, *Non, laissons au moins la Republique de Lettres.*

This community, however, can hardly be said to have the features of any government, and more nearly approaches the fabled existence of society, called by jurists "a state of nature." There is no head or visible authority, either hereditary or elected; the governing principles are self-love, hatred, and envy; property, which here consists in reputation, is like all original property, the produce of a man's own labour, and is generally the object of many treacherous stratagems, and cruel outrages, on the part of the poorer members.

It is also a remarkable coincidence, that the richer a man becomes the more he is attacked, and the equality of rights consists in the impunity of wrongs. I happened lately to meet with some of these savages. Lælius has a sort of patriarchal influence amongst them, solely on account of his superior age and correct memory; he can awe his fellows by quoting the decisions of their grandfathers, and amuse them by playing a garrulous fountain of anecdote; he is in what was called by Wilkes an anecdotage; is trifling in his conversation, and superficial in his writings; but his works were published forty years ago, and he avails himself of the notion that the booksellers and public of that day were far superior to any thing at present to be found on the Quai Voltaire, or the Palais Royal. He is withal extremely neat in his language, and indulgent in his sentiments; and is thereby enabled to conceal the vagueness of his ideas and the malice of his heart: both, however, appear when he commits himself to print.

Junius is a man of an equal age, but who resigns his claim to distinction on that ground, in order to obtain the more difficult success

achieved by youthful enterprise; he is deeply learned, but having reached eminence by his scholarship, he now wishes to throw it off, as a postillion takes off his boots when the stage is finished. I was surprised to find him always in the house of one of the most frivolous women of the age, and often wondered how each could derive pleasure from the intercourse of the other, till some one made the remark that a valuable commerce of vanity was carried on between them: she furnished him with a reputation for gallantry, which he wants, and he furnished her with a character for wit, which she had no hope of obtaining by any exertions of her own. The hours they pass together must indeed be disagreeable to both, for he misunderstands scandal, and she misquotes history. I found him the other day hinting to her his suspicions of an intrigue which had been blown a twelvemonth before, and she soon afterwards asked him if it was true that Catharine of Medicis had ordered the St. Barthelemy at the instigation of Louvois.

There is no class of persons, it may be observed, whose failings are more open to remark-

than men of letters. In the first place, they are raised on an eminence, where every thing they do is carefully observed by those who have not been able to get so high ; in the next place, their occupation, especially if they are poets, being either the expression of superabundant feeling, or the pursuit of praise, they are naturally more sensitive and quick in their emotions than any other class of men ; hence a thousand little quarrels, and passing irritabilities. In the next place, they have the power of wounding deeply those of whom they are envious. A man who shoots envies another who shoots better ; a shoemaker even envies another who makes more popular shoes ; but the sportsman and the shoemaker can only say they do not like their rival : the author cuts his brother author to the bone, with the sharp edge of an epigram or bon mot. Again, it often happens, that a man of letters is ignorant of the world ; hence he offends against a number of the laws of company, reveals a hundred little feelings which he ought to conceal, and often shows the resentment of injured pride, in return for what was meant as kindness.

The quality which is most offensive in poets is their very ready servility. It is not easy to read with patience the verses which make Augustus a god, and exalt Nero into a prodigy of virtue.

Too many of the worst men have got the tribute of praise from the best poets; Poly-crates, Augustus, Nero, Justinian, Louis XIV. Charles II., Bubb Doddington, the Duke of Ferrara, have all had their wreath of luxuriant laurel from the hands of poets: how fortunate it would have been, had we been able to say the reverse; that bad princes had all been blamed, and only good ones praised! The praise of poetry would then have been what it ought to be, an object of difficult attainment, adding another to the few worldly motives which kings have, to be better than their fellow-men: verse would then, indeed, have been sacred, and a few lines, expressing in noble terms the great qualities which had been actually possessed by the object of them, would have been remembered and quoted to the latest posterity, giving a dignity to poetry, an incentive to virtue, and a spectacle fitted to unite the approbation with the wonder of mankind.

IRRESOLUTION.

Paris.

FRANCHEMONT is the man of my acquaintance who has the greatest quantity of English spirit, and French *esprit* : his opinions are always liberal, his intentions always upright, and his wishes always humane. As he joins to the possession of these qualities high rank and an immense fortune, it is no wonder that he is perpetually incited by his friends to enter into public life, to serve his country in the field, or his fellow-citizens in the senate. His own ardour seconds their advice ; but after ten years' deliberation he has not yet determined whether he shall pursue the career of arms, or whether he shall join himself to a party of patriots, and make himself the dread of an encroaching court ; nor is he entirely divided between these pursuits. I found him one day eagerly perusing Eüler ; when he declared with emphasis, that the abstract sciences were the occupation best adapted to make man happy, to engage his mind with-

out irritation, to offer obstacles without any great danger of defeat, and to point out results which contained no disappointment. On another occasion, he was examining Varro and Columella; and when he informed me that he had finally determined to abandon public life, and to make himself useful to mankind by the improvement of agriculture, an occupation which was of certain benefit to the public, and gave a zest to domestic enjoyment, I endeavoured, with eagerness, to deter him from this resolution; but the more I argued the more he persisted in exalting the charms of retirement. Two hours afterwards he burst into my room, and informed me of the landing of Buonaparte. After the first surprise I asked him “What do you mean to do?” — “Oh! as for that, my resolution is taken: the success of Napoleon would put an end to the peace of Europe, and the liberty of France: whatever faults I find with the present government may be repaired: it is my duty as a citizen to arm. I shall offer to put myself at the head of the National Guard of my province, in which the enemy has landed, and if the King will allow

me to be independent of his Generals, we may have a very speedy success; — a prosperous event will convince the court that the friends of liberty are not the enemies of royalty.” I approved warmly of his intention, and advised him to go instantly to the Tuilleries. But before doing so he thought proper to consult his friends. The first he went to was a virtuous, but somewhat fanatical Constitutionalist. On hearing his friend’s intention, “What,” said he, “will you leave Paris till you have assured to your country the observation of the charter? The present is a moment of alarm to the court, and they will grant any thing; but if this movement is repressed, the cowl and the censorship will be more active than ever. If you value France, go to the Chamber, and ask for the appointment of a constitutional ministry.” Franchemont, somewhat shaken, went to his next friend, who, being a Republican, said to him, “It is all over with the Bourbons: the whole country will be in favour of Napoleon; and, besides, their bad faith is too notorious to make any concession valuable: wait in Paris, and we may bind down Napoleon

to a real charter." — "Perhaps," said Franchemont, "the country, as you say, is ready to pronounce the abdication of the Bourbons : if so, I am quiet ; but even then I never can favour the cause of Napoleon. The assistance of a military chief has always brought on the downfall of real patriots. Recollect the example of Cicero — with what fatal imprudence he lent himself to the policy of Pompey, and consented to prolong the command of Cæsar, till at length, aware of his folly, he exclaimed to his friend, on entering upon the civil war, *Si victus eris, proscribare ; si viceris, tamen servias* ; so it will be with the adherents of Napoleon." Notwithstanding my friend's speech, his ardour in the Bourbon cause was somewhat cooled by his friend's ridicule, and he endeavoured to blow it again into a flame, by the help of a royalist bellows. His loyal friend, however, who was a staunch courtier, said, "Franchemont, your spirit is excellent, but you must not anticipate the King's counsels ; it would be wrong to show any jealousy of his orders at this time : — go to the foot of the Throne, and declare yourself ready to serve under any General His Majesty may appoint."

Distracted by such opposite counsel — unwilling to turn his back on liberty — suspicious of the sovereign he was about to serve — too proud to ask a favour where he meant a service, Franchemont returned to ask my opinion. M. de Lasnes, a man of great experience, who was with me, heard his doubts, and address him in a decisive tone: — “ Avoid the perils of this crisis; you will lose your own life, and plunge your children into poverty and disgrace. Retire with them and your wife to your country-seat.” To my great astonishment Franchemont seemed pleased, and even grateful for this advice: he went away to prepare his family for the journey. When he was gone, I remonstrated with De Lasnes on the mischief he had done, both to Franchemont and the public. — “ You are mistaken,” said he; “ a man of his undecided temper cannot be of real use to any cause: before he has finally determined, the first moment, which is always the most favourable, will be lost; when he has determined, he will immediately repent his choice, and contrast the difficulties he encounters with a fanciful picture of the advantages attending an opposite

conduct; too keen of sight not to perceive the absurdity of his adherents — too impartial to subscribe entirely to any creed — too anxious to be right, to bear the idea of being wrong, and too ingenuous and too sensitive to be blind to his own mistakes, he will often err, and always regret: his behaviour will be a tissue of rash action and more fatal inactivity; he will gradually lose his own confidence, and inspire the contempt of others. When applied to conduct, the work of a too subtle mind resembles the effects of a mean spirit, and the world are better satisfied with a solution which furnishes a gratification to malevolence, than one which supposes a refinement of intellect. They conceive themselves entitled to distrust him who does not seem unsuspicious of himself, whilst they respect the undeviating line of strong stupidity, and suppose reasons for a behaviour which proceeds from the want of them. What then shall withstand the man, who, to a tolerable understanding and a sagacious perception, joins boldness of decision? He will repair errors, whilst a man of nicer tact, but less firmness, is content to avoid them; and having once

fixed his own plan, he will leave the rest to fortune —

Hâc arte Pollux hâc vagus Hercules
Innisus arces attigit igneas.

FOREIGN TRAVEL.

Paris, 1815.

THE English and the French, after an absence of twenty years, have again met in the common intercourse of life, and are exchanging bows, ideas, and sentiments.

I overheard, one day, a young Englishman entertaining a French lady with profligate principles, and profane jests: although she had often heard morality and religion attacked before, she was so scandalised by the coarseness of his conversation, that she, at last, told him his language might suit the vicious society of London, but was too wicked for Paris: his companion, was, at the same time, telling an obscene story to a young lady who fell asleep in the middle of it; — these young men are not improved by travel.

An English married lady, whom I knew, was remarkable for the plainness of her dress, the modesty of her manners, and the piety of her

conduct. She went from Paris this year, with her head made into a stand for flowers, her ears never open but to flattery, and her mouth full of the pretty phrases, “a little flirtation,” “innocent behaviour,” “harmless dissipation,” “stupidity of married women in England,” “greater liberality in general society,” &c. — she is not improved by travel.

I know a sensible English tradesman, who used to shut a Frenchman out of doors; and laughed at every body who did not speak English as correctly, and even as vulgarly as himself; he was so pleased with the kind reception he got in France, and the patient attention with which all his blunders were listened to, that he promises he will go and do likewise; — he is improved by his travels.

A farmer of good sense, and good heart, travelled through France soon after the peace: he found that the people were neither sulky in their manner, nor full of hatred against the English, nor utterly abandoned to vice and folly, as he had been told; but on the contrary, civil, gay, and ingenuous; nay, he found tolerable farmers, and honest fathers of families: fewer

paupers than in England, and much good effected by the Revolution; he imputed the old quarrels of his nation with theirs to the Government, and recommends to the people to give each other the right hand of friendship; — this man is improved, and will improve others.

Travellers from the Continent seldom stay long enough in England to understand the nature of her institutions, and sound the deep seas of her prosperity. The French think they have shown great discernment, as well as liberality, in establishing *Trial by Jury*. They do not seem to perceive that the goodness of the stuff depends on the material of which it is made, and that a jury must not only consist of twelve men, but of twelve honest men; otherwise it is only a shirt very well made with rotten thread. As long as the members of juries in France are liable to be gained, or awed by Government, the institution is good for nothing, and indeed rather pernicious.

The Spaniards, in the same humour, borrowed from England the liberty of the press; but they forgot to provide for the liberty of the individual who was to print; and the con-

sequence was, that any author who published against the reigning authority, was immediately seized and imprisoned. England, like a work of genius, deserves and requires a slow and frequent perusal to understand its beauties.

Many an anomalous custom contains an important lesson, and many a paradoxical law is deduced from a profound and salutary observation.

VANITY AND LOVE OF FAME.

Paris.

VANITY is a passion which crosses its own purposes, and begets contempt where it means to inspire admiration. It begins by trying to deceive others, and always re-acts by deceiving and blinding him who practises it. The conscience is thus soothed into torpor, and nothing more is wanting to make a man base to the lowest degree. — Vanity and meanness are constant companions; for a man accustomed to sacrifice truth and honesty, to obtain applause, can more easily do it to gain the substantial goods of life. This rule, however, has many exceptions. Florus was a man, who, as he himself acknowledged at the end of his life, owed

his ruin to the indulgence of his vanity; for a little applause he often sacrificed great objects; to obtain all kinds of fame he often made himself completely ridiculous; and to revenge himself on those who eclipsed him in reputation, he alienated one by one all his friends and supporters; yet, though a distressed and ambitious man, he never bartered a single opinion; or suffered the smallest stain upon his honour, for the sake of fortune or of power.

Proteus did not take so many shapes to escape questions as vanity does to provoke admiration. Junius is a very good man, of tolerable sense, but no knowledge; yet nothing will satisfy him but being thought a great scholar. Lucius has spent three parts of his life in reading, but he employs the remaining quarter in trying to persuade the world that he is a very idle, dissolute fellow, in order that they may wonder where his knowledge comes from. Needwell tells every one that he is descended from Henry IV. of France; whilst Pearson is equally anxious to proclaim that he is the son of a cobbler, and that all his riches and consequence are of his own making. Vau-

sien, who is a mere man of the world, affects the greatest love of solitude; but Tirlemont, the author of a treatise on cubic equations, fatigues every company he is with, to let them understand that he is acquainted with all the scandal of the day. I had got so far, when my friend Paradell came in, and read my paper. He said, when he had finished, "The fault, as you yourself show, is not in being vain, but in placing vanity in a wrong position. A wise man, as a good author has observed, knows his defects, and hides them; a fool betrays his by attempting to cover them. This is the darn in the stocking which is said to be the sign of premeditated poverty. It is the same thing with good qualities. A wise man is vain of his talents or knowledge; but he shows them in a modest way, that the world may supply the praise due to them: a fool adds the praise himself, and the world, jealous of its authority, gives none. Vanity, which every one blames, is the most universal of all motives of action. *Et qui de contemnendâ gloriâ librum scripsit, nomen affixit.* There are many characters so slightly built, as to be capable of no higher or

more noble incitement. Were they without vanity, they would be indolent in affairs, uncivil and rude in society, selfish in their actions and behaviour. It is to a desire to conciliate public opinion that we owe all the virtues of weak characters: and even many great men have been sustained in their career by the same useful passion. What do you say to Cicero, to Sully, and a thousand others, (not to mention our friend Eschines,) who have derived their best support from the happy faculty of being pleased with themselves?

“It cannot be denied that vanity furnishes to many individuals their whole stock of happiness. Sibillus is so fortunately constituted, that no ridicule, no neglect, no series of bad success can wrest from him the opinion that he is the first poet of the age. In a garret in Gray’s Inn Lane he enjoys the imaginary applause of a listening world, as much as Petrarch could do when he was crowned in the Capitol.

“There is no motive which ends in self more noble than the love of fame. This is one of the passions which has, in an extraordinary degree, a good and a bad side. There is

nothing more silly and contemptible than the mere *besoin de faire parler de soi*, which animates so large a proportion of the candidates for fame. The wearing a particular dress, or driving an uncommon carriage; writing quarto books about nothing, or making a speech to every mob that can be collected, are generally proofs of a desire to obtain distinction without the qualities which deserve it. But there is a love of fame that is the most powerful instrument of which Nature makes use to produce discovery in science, and eminence in arts. A man of genius feels himself alternately impelled to perform great actions, and deterred by the difficulty and labour of the enterprise. In this struggle, the desire of exertion would gradually become less violent, and would generally, in the end, be stifled by pleasure and indolence, did not the love of fame furnish an auxiliary incitement to action. Pushed on by such an impulse, the man of genius overcomes every obstacle; he undervalues health, time, life itself, in comparison to the attainment of his object; he investigates, weighs, and provides against the most minute blot in his plans;

he passes the night without repose, and the day without recreation ; he forgets the wear of continual thought, the labour which perfection requires, or the dangers which an untried enterprise may offer : — till, at length, he bursts forth in splendour, like the sun through a mid-day fog, the poet, the philosopher, or the hero of his age. But his glory is not yet complete. In centuries still to come, his verse shall swell the bosom, or awake the tear ; his discovery shall exalt the mind of the student, or guide the rudder of the navigator ; his example shall animate the breast of patriots, and keep alive the love of immortality.

“ Having mentioned this subject, I cannot but notice the cold objections of some metaphysicians. It has been argued, that posthumous fame is an unreasonable object of desire, as no man can obtain it till he is incapable of enjoying it. To this I shall answer that he who has done actions to deserve it, has already obtained it in imagination ; he feels himself living in the future ; he foresees the homage that will attend upon his name. It would be easy to show, that almost every great poet and philosopher has

foreseen his own immortality. If it be objected that this foretaste of fame, being unaccompanied by any homage, must be an airy and unsubstantial pleasure, I shall briefly reply that it is of the same nature with many others which have always been appreciated. If it is a pleasure to contribute to the happiness, though without hearing the thanks of an unknown beggar; if it is a pleasure to be read and admired by distant nations, though they transmit no testimony of their admiration; if it is a pleasure to be loved by persons in England, even when on a voyage across the Atlantic; — it may also be a pleasure, and one of the highest degree, to be conscious that we shall obtain the admiration, the blessing, and the love of future generations.

“The vanity of which the severe philosopher speaks so rigorously, is the cordial which makes life supportable to individuals, and the chain of roses of mixed society. And when it rises to a love of fame, and especially of immortal fame, it is the spring that moves the greatest and most useful characters. Mention to me the names of those who ‘*sui memores alios*

fecére merendo,' without vanity or love of fame!"

Seeing I did not answer, my friend snapt his fingers in token of victory: I laughed at his vanity. —

THE WORLD.

THERE is no idea more vague or more unfounded than that which a young person attaches to the word — *World*. It is perpetually held out by moralists and divines, that the world is a wilderness where every vice and every bad passion grows without restraint; and those who have lived their whole lives in, and have in fact formed a part of that very world of which they complain, are continually venting their satire against its malice, its injustice, and its ingratitude. How much, then, is a young man surprised, when, upon entering with more than due caution upon a field where he expects to be beset by snares and assailed by calumny, he finds himself received with easy and unaffected kindness, and frequently obliged to the good nature of a casual acquaintance. He is unable to trace this philanthropy to its true cause; he is not aware that, although each

individual may be engaged in the pursuit of his own interest or passion, the society bears no enmity to him by whom no one has yet been rivalled or thwarted. There is a general and superficial love of our neighbour in mankind, which to him appears sincere and genuine benevolence. He goes on, careless and confident, till his progress awakens jealousy, and his imprudence gives room for slander. His indignation is roused; he recollects the admonitions of his books, and again begins to rail at the ambition, avarice, malice, and vanity of man. His disappointment breaks out into bitterness, and his mistake begets suspicion, which become the elements of education to a new generation. It may be worth while, then, to consider the imputed faults of the world, each in their turn, and to endeavour to inspire a just candour, rather than a total abhorrence of it.

Ambition, instead of being always a bad passion, is one which has led to many of the enterprises most beneficial to mankind. A desire of distinction inspired a Sully and a Franklin, as well as a Richelieu and an Alberoni. The difference is, that this passion is subservient to the

welfare of mankind in good and well-regulated dispositions, whilst, in bad hearts, it tends only to the aggrandisement of the individual. A man of pure ambition will always sacrifice his own elevation to his principles, whilst he whose ambition is impure will always sacrifice his principles to his own elevation. The first always looks upon the maintenance or furtherance of certain measures as the chief thing to be desired, and upon himself as an instrument for promoting them: the second views his own possession of power as the chief thing to be desired, and the accomplishment of general objects as a work that may be forwarded or postponed, according to convenience. A man, rightly ambitious, will rejoice even in the success of a rival, if it is likely to advance the public welfare, whilst a badly ambitious man has the disposition, unjustly attributed to the great Lord Chatham —

“ Would save his country if he could,
But d——n it if another should.”

But this point, namely, the usefulness of ambition, is, it should seem, sufficiently obvious;

therefore I shall not insist upon it. The next worldly passion of which I shall speak is the love of gain, to which I may join the love of pleasure. Divines are never weary of holding up these two propensities as absolutely vicious in themselves, and tending only to misery in this world, and the next. I cannot agree in this representation; it is agreeable to the benevolence of the Deity to suppose that he showered down the flowers and fruits of the earth, not to tantalise the being whom he created, but for his comfort and enjoyment. What, then, can be more natural and right than that he should exert his physical and mental faculties in order to obtain them? And the consequences are such as might be expected from employments agreeable to the will of the Creator. The individual finds his mind occupied and interested, his health improved, and his prospects continually brightening; the community increases in wealth and knowledge; the arts which contribute to the enjoyment, and instruction which tends to the improvement, of man, advance with equal steps. Observe the countries where the love of gain and the spirit of traffic have most prevailed, — at

Florence in the fifteenth century, in Holland and in England, — and you will see that they are the same which have made the greatest discoveries in science, and produced many of the ornaments of modern literature: the reason of which is clear; for it is only when men, by their industry and pursuit of wealth, have amassed a sufficient stock to lay out something on superfluities, that they can allow any thing for the support of astronomy and poetry.

It has been often objected, that the progress of wealth introduces dishonesty; but this is a mistake founded on superficial observation. The honesty of a rude peasantry is the honesty of ignorance: it has no more merit than the temperance of a man, who, never having seen grapes, should leave them hanging on the bush. The first sight of money dissipates this species of honesty. But when society has advanced in civilisation, there arises instead of it a more enlightened integrity, which is founded on the precepts of morality and the control of opinion.

Great merit is often placed in abstinence from sensual enjoyments. There are, un-

doubtedly, examples of men who give so exclusive an attention to the preparation of luxuries for their own personal use, that they can hardly afford time for the duties which they owe to their God and to their neighbour: but for a person to say, that he must renounce the indulgence of the senses altogether, for fear of being entirely absorbed by it, is to confess a degree of physical appetite and a want of moral taste, which does but little honour to his temperance. Nor is there any sense in supposing that we are intended to derive all our pleasures from the mind. Our bodily constitution is so joined to the mental, that our pains are always communicated from the one to the other; and the Stoic himself could not be insensible to the attack of a cholic, or the amputation of a leg. Why, then, should we not take advantage of the dispensation of nature, which also gives a participation of pleasures? And ought we to lose any opportunity of partaking in the bounty, and being grateful for the providence of our Creator? The man who gives a feast is offended if none come to partake of it: may not the Supreme Being

have somewhat of the same feeling to those who reject his gifts? But, say the well-meaning persons who disdain and despise the usual conduct of the world, is it not wicked to consume in luxuries what might afford subsistence for thousands of poor people? This argument, which might have had weight in times of ignorance, is indisputably disproved by the science of the present day. It is now evidently demonstrated, that the money which is spent on manufactures of convenience and luxury supports the families of industrious labourers, whilst that which is indiscriminately given in charity, too often tends to the increase of an idle and miserable population.

The result which I would enforce is, that we should enjoy the conveniences of this life, without setting too great a price on them. Our occupation should always be to improve our own lives, and add to the happiness of our neighbours; but a pleasure which fairly offers itself, and which has no vice in it, should not, because it is a pleasure, be avoided.

With regard to the malice of the world, it may be remarked, that those who complain

most of it are often those who deservedly suffer by its judgment; nay, the malice of which they are victims is often only a retribution for that with which they have treated every individual who fell under their observation. Yet it must be allowed that the opinion of the world is often stained with precipitancy and injustice. The first rumour that is propagated produces an immediate sentence, from which it is difficult to obtain an appeal; and very often the fullest justification is unable to allay the storm of prejudice by which an innocent character has been assailed. Yet, even in these cases, it is generally to be observed, that some imprudence has been committed, which has opened the way to misconstruction. Perhaps, upon the whole, the general effect of an active and prying police of tongues over conduct is beneficial. It teaches men to observe decorum, as well as to consult feeling; it teaches them, or should teach them, to act in secret under an additional control, which is often more powerful than conscience; and when women see their slightest imprudencies exaggerated into gross misbehaviour, it must teach them to avoid

temptation, which is the most certain means of being free from evil. But when a person has satisfied the reasonable demands of propriety, as well as the just dues of conscience, it by no means becomes him to be doubtful or timorous. A bold countenance and a confident manner impose on the great as well as the little vulgar; and mercy, it must be owned, is never shown to him who once confesses himself in the wrong: and this, perhaps, because it is usually a proof of want of courage, the most unpopular of all defects.

I shall be told, perhaps, of instances of excellent men who have suffered the martyrdom of opinion. Undoubtedly there are such, but many who seem to be condemned without cause have something in their characters that is mean or deceitful. Others have neither of these defects, but an undisguised liberty of speech, or an impatient quickness at taking offence, which makes them the natural enemies of their species. At first none appear to be more unjustly persecuted than those who change their opinions, either in politics or religion. Reason would teach us that such a change was rather a favourable proof

of candour, but experience has shown that it is so generally the effect of a want of integrity and principle, as to justify the saying of a lady of great talents, that she never could help confounding a convert and a convict.

It must be confessed, however, that mankind take too great a delight in speaking ill of their neighbours. It is, indeed, quite surprising to see persons, generous and friendly in their nature, retail the most scandalous reports concerning people whom they would willingly assist with half their fortune. There is often no greater contrast than between the innocence of a man's life and the malice of his conversation; and he who would spare neither his time nor his fortune for a beggar and a stranger, often exhibits a want of charity and humanity to a companion and a friend. This is nowhere more remarkable than amongst the French philosophers, as exhibited in their own writings, and in the correspondence of Grimm. They are full of compassion for a poor family at the other end of the kingdom, and at the same time are pulling one another to pieces like wild beasts. The cause, no doubt, is, that their envy and ma-

lignity are only excited by those who are and may be their rivals. And in the present age scandal, detraction, and calumny, have taken the place of open enmity and private war, just as forgery and private stealing have become the substitutes of highway robbery and murder. On this subject I cannot refrain from quoting the eloquent denunciation of Jeremy Taylor : * —

“ Every man hath in his own life sins enough, in his own mind trouble enough, in his own fortune evils enough, and in performance of his offices failings more than enough to entertain his own enquiry; so that curiosity after the affairs of others cannot be without envy and an evil mind. What is it to me if my neighbour’s grandfather were a Syrian, or his grandmother illegitimate, or that another is indebted five thousand pounds, or whether his wife be expensive? But commonly curious persons, or (as the Apostle’s phrase is) busy-bodies, are not solicitous or inquisitive into the beauty and order of a well governed family, or after the vir-

* Jeremy Taylor’s Holy Living.

tues of an excellent person ; but if there be any thing for which men keep locks, and bars, and porters, things that blush to see the light, and are either shameful in manners, or private in nature, these things are their care and their business. But if great things will satisfy our enquiry, the courses of the sun and moon, the spots in their faces, the firmament of heaven and the supposed orbs, the ebbing and flowing of the sea, are work enough for us: or, if this be not, let him tell me whether the number of the stars be even or odd, and when they began to be so ; since some ages have discovered new stars, which the former knew not, but might have seen if they had been where now they are fixed. If these be too troublesome, search lower, and tell me why this turf this year brings forth a daisy, and the next year a plantane ; why the apple bears its seed in his heart, and wheat bears it in his head : let him tell why a graft taking nourishment from a crab-stock shall have a fruit more noble than its nurse and parent ; let him say why the best of oil is at the top, the best of wine in the middle, and the best of honey at the bottom, otherwise than it is in some liquors that

are thinner, and in some that are thicker. But these things are not such as please busy-bodies; they must feed upon tragedies, and stories of misfortunes and crimes; and yet, tell them ancient stories of the ravishment of chaste maidens, or the debauchment of nations, or the extreme poverty of learned persons, or the persecutions of the old saints; or the changes of government, and the sad accidents happening in royal families among the Arsacidæ, the Cæsars, the Ptolemies, these were enough to scratch the itch of knowing sad stories: but unless you tell them something sad and new, something that is done within the bounds of their knowledge or relation, it seems tedious and unsatisfying; which shows plainly it is an evil spirit: envy and idleness married together and begot curiosity. Therefore Plutarch rarely well compares curious and inquisitive ears to the execrable gates of cities, out of which only malefactors and hangmen, and tragedies pass, nothing is chaste or holy. If a physician should go from house to house unsent for, and enquire what woman hath a cancer in her bowels, or what man a fistula in his colic-gut, though he could pre-

tend to cure it, he would be almost as unwelcome as the disease itself: and therefore it is inhumane to enquire after crimes and disasters without pretence of amending them, but only to discover them. We are not angry with searchers and publicans when they look only on public merchandise, but when they break open trunks, and pierce vessels, and unrip packs, and open sealed letters.

“ Curiosity is the direct incontinency of the spirit; and adultery itself, in its principle, is many times nothing but a curious inquisition after, and envying of another man’s inclosed pleasures: and there have been many who refused fairer objects that they might ravish an inclosed woman from her retirement and single possessor. But these inquisitions are seldom without danger, never without baseness; they are neither just, nor honest, nor delightful, and very often useless to the curious enquirer. For men stand upon their guards against them, as they secure their meat against harpies and cats, laying all their counsels and secrets out of their way; or as men clap their garments close about them when the searching and saucy winds would

discover their nakedness : as knowing that what men willingly hear, they do willingly speak of. Knock therefore at the door before you enter upon your neighbour's privacy; and remember that there is no difference between entering into his house, and looking into it."

NATIONAL CHARACTER.

Paris, 1815.

I WAS sitting one day in company with a Frenchman, a Spaniard, an Italian, an Englishman, and a German, when a conversation began upon the merits of their respective nations. As I found the argument growing warm, especially on the part of the Frenchman, who was pouring a shower of small talk upon the Englishman, and of the Italian who was near touching the ceiling with his hands, in order to invoke the vengeance of Heaven upon the German, I bethought me of a method to temper the discussion; I proposed that each should set forth his reasons for preferring his own nation in a continued speech, and that I, as an impartial hearer, should be the judge amongst them. My proposal was soon accepted; but harmony had like to have been again destroyed by a dispute who was to begin. The French-

man talked loud, the German muttered, and the Italian spouted. Amidst the confusion of their voices I could now and then distinguish the words, *comédie, boulevards, esprit, empfindungen, genuss, bequemlichkeit, cantatrice, capo d'opera, cosa superba, &c.*; only the Spaniard, and the Englishman looked upon the contest with seeming indifference, and contempt; at last I succeeded in stopping them, and prevailed on them to speak in the following order.

I addrest myself first to the Spaniard, who was by no means a Liberal, and said, "Tell me why you consider your own nation as the wisest, the happiest, and the best?"—he answered, "I consider the two former epithets as entirely superfluous; for if we are the best, we must be the happiest; and if we are the happiest and best, we must be the wisest."

"Now, I believe, there is no man who performs, so well as the Spaniard, his duty to God, and to his neighbour. He worships in the most exact, and even the most splendid manner, the Divine Creator, the Redeemer, the Holy Ghost, and the Blessed Virgin, and he does not for-

get to pray for the intercession of the least of the Saints whom the church has admitted ; he is loyal to his king, to the utmost stretch of Christian patience and submission ; he is kind and charitable to his fellow-creatures, helping the needy, and feeding the hungry ; he reaps the reward of his good actions in a perpetual cheerfulness. Cheerfulness is the habit of the good ; gaiety is but the delirium of the wicked. Nor let it be supposed, as many declamatory writers have asserted, that the Inquisition has diminished the happiness of Spain. It is only through the acts of the Inquisition, that the Spanish people have been preserved in an unanimous faith. Now, even granting, for argument's sake, that other religions may be equally good for a future life, there is nothing which tends so much to union and harmony in the present, as worship at the same altar, reliance upon the same means of salvation, obligation to the same duties, and hope of the same final reward. Much has been said of the victims of the Inquisition. The care which that holy tribunal employed not to hurt the reputation of families, by publishing their proceedings, has

served to spread a clamour against them; for that which is secret is always magnified by report. It is thus that fame revenges herself on those who wish to keep her out. But, in reality, are the victims of the Inquisition to be compared with those of the day of St. Barthelemi, and the revocation of the edict of Nantz?—such are the effects of admitting the infection, and then endeavouring to stop it: or are they to be compared with the thousands who suffered in England under Henry VIII., Edward VI., and Elizabeth?—such are the consequences of admitting, without controul, the preachers of heresy and schism.

“ If we do not want the religious toleration of England, still less do we stand in need of her political liberty. The sun which favours our country with its propitious influence, gives us enjoyment sufficient without seeking to busy ourselves in the affairs of government. Liberty is, in fact, a poor substitute for a fine climate. The people of the South only require the presence of that power which raises the corn — which ripens the grape, in order to be satisfied with their position. To ask if they are happy,

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you need only ask if they exist. But with the people of the North it is necessary to dig mines, to hew down forests, to build houses, to obtain, in a small space of a few feet, that warm, comfortable sensation, which a southern peasant feels in the large mansion of nature; he is obliged to look for some artificial source of pleasure, to intoxicate himself with the poison of distilled spirits, or the tumult of political contention. We court no such advantages. To those who love care we leave the trouble of governing; and we should think it as absurd to insist upon electing deputies, and making laws because we have the right to do it, as to carry burdens because we have backs capable of supporting them.* Having said what is sufficient to convince all men of sense, I will not dilate upon the beauty of our country; the majesty of Granada, the splendour of Seville, the fertility of Valencia. You know our land, and can do justice to it.”—Having thus spoken, the Spaniard folded his arms in his cloak, which he always

* How much mortified this gentleman must be at the late Revolution.—Ed.

wore, even in France ; and I observed he never listened to a word that was spoken afterwards.

Having put the same question to the Italian that I had addrest to the Spaniard, he answered to the following purport : — That what had been just said concerning the pleasure derived from climate, applied with equal force to Italy, and set their two countries above all the rest of Europe. “Indeed,” he said, “the native of London, or Hamburgh, cannot conceive, unless he travels to our land, the pleasure to be derived from the touch of a cisalpine atmosphere. Our nerves seem to swell and extend themselves to receive the delightful sensation ; our eyes dwell without fatigue or pain upon the beauties of a rich and warm landscape ; even the voice maintains its clearness only in the air which the sun has blessed. But if we had merely this advantage, we should rival and not precede Spain in happiness. It is to another circumstance that Italy owes her glory, her occupation, her delight : — to taste. With justice it has been said, that this is the only pursuit of which the pleasures far out-balance the pains. A man may meet with an unfaithful mistress,

or be rejected by an ungrateful sovereign, but nothing obliges him to gaze at a bad picture, or dwell upon a disproportioned building. A great work of art may be said to be the most successful result of human effort: a fine statue requires as much genius in the conception as the most difficult problem of Newton; it demands as much skill in the execution as the formation of a time-piece; and when finished, it attracts the admiration, and gratifies the senses of thousands of spectators for thousands of years. It is, I hope, needless for them to prove that Italy excels all other nations in this respect. The sublimity of Michael Angelo, the grace and expression of Raphael, in fine, the innumerable merits of our great architects, sculptors, and painters, are not to be insulted by a comparison with the smoky buildings of London, the monuments in the Musée François, or the lusty goddesses of the Belgian painters. Give me the portico of the Pantheon, and the interior of St. Peter's, the Transfiguration, the Communion of St. Jerome, the St. Michael, the St. Peter and St. Paul, the St. Peter Martyr, the Moses of Michael Angelo, the Venus and

Apollo of the ancients ; give me, above all, the music which our admirable Paesiello, Cimarosa, and Rossini have produced, — and I will not yield the palm of happiness to any part of Europe. For the prize of wisdom, too, I think we may lay a fair claim. The greatest natural philosophers, the most skilful negociators, the most gifted poets, own Italy as their birth-place. The discovery of the laws of motion, of the resistance of the air, of the barometer, of the telescope, and lately of Galvanism ; the knowledge of a fourth quarter of the globe ; the history of Italy, of Florence, of the Council of Trent, and of the Civil Wars of France, the *Inferno*, the *Goffredo*, and the *Orlando Furioso*, from a portion of the share which Italy has contributed to the civilisation of Europe. It is for you, Sir," he concluded, turning to the German, "to prove that the universities of Heidelberg and Halle have done more."

The German, though he seemed to be smoking his pipe with great apathy, was not insensible to the reproach ; and, like a skilful general, immediately changed the field of action. — "I can find but one fault with your discourse, Signor," he replied ; "it is, that you have

entirely omitted to answer the principal question, namely, why you consider your nation as the best? To this interrogatory, I can reply, with a safe conscience, that the Germans are the best people, because they do not assassinate secretly, or murder openly; because they are honest in their dealings and pay their debts, whether to government or individuals, with conscience-calming punctuality. From Hamburgh to Clagenfurt, there is scarcely a village which has not its schoolmaster, whilst the capital of a province is almost ignorant of the name of executioner. Our fruit hangs on the trees by the road-side without being touched by any one; and the streets of our largest towns become still as sleep early in the night. Other nations, indeed, may boast of great discoveries in science, and of a rapid progress in political philosophy; but we furnished them with the means. They have sown a great part and reaped the whole; but we gave the field and invented the plough. It is to us that they are indebted for the art of printing, without which, knowledge could not have moved; and for the Reformation, without which it would have been arrested in

its march. In modern times, too, our literature has taken a far-extended springing leap, which leaving behind it the long-past glories of Italy and France, place it by the side of England in the race towards the spectator-girt, laurel-surrounded goal, which is always in the horizon of those bright geniuses, who have a heart-convulsing desire of present immortality, and a thousand-man power of intellectual sensation."

These last words caused a pause: even the Frenchman took a pinch of snuff, and sneezed twice before he would begin. At last he started with such volubility in praise of France, and of Paris, that I am quite incapable of representing his harangue. He gave the first ten minutes to those who had spoken before him, and tried to prove that France excelled them in the very particulars on which they had insisted. He said there was no climate in Europe equal to that of the south of France, and that even at Paris the winter was over in February. As for the fine arts, he quoted Lalande, who had spent several years in and written several volumes upon Italy, and who maintains there is nothing to be seen there equal to what is to be found in

France. In modern times he thought it beyond a question, that the French painters were the first in the world, which, however, was not to be wondered at, as the English had not at all turned their attention to the fine arts. The works of David, he conceived, express a sublimity to which Raphael, born in a barbarous age, never could attain; in music the French now far excelled the Italians. As for virtue, which his German friend had introduced somewhat *mal à propos* into the discussion, he, like the Delphine of Madame de Staël, defined it to consist in a succession of generous impulses. And these impulses acted no where with such vigour, as in the country where an officer sacrificed his life, in order to give the alarm to his regiment, and a father went cheerfully to execution to save the life of his son. Having thrown out these remarks with an air *degagé*, he put on a more Socratic look, as he addressed himself to the Englishman. “It is with your nation that ours is most fit to be compared. In England, and in France, *les lumieres* are generally spread like the rays of the sun; in other countries they are scattered like flashes of lightning. But

it is more especially in French that elementary books in every art and science are written; it is in French that the reading of the world profound or trivial, is carried on. If a mathematician wishes to read the deepest book of science, he studies the *Mecanique Celeste*; if a Russian nobleman desires to learn what is meant by the words *feeling* or *wit*, he takes up the tragedies of Racine, or the tales of Voltaire, and learns to smile and to cry like a civilised being. Even the discoveries of your great Newton have been brought to perfection by D'Alembert, and Laplace; and in pure mathematics you have not for a long time produced an equal to Lagrange. Impartial judges (bowing to me) will agree, that in the most profound and abstract of human sciences, the people whom you treat as frivolous and superficial, have gone far beyond you. Your mathematicians of Oxford and Cambridge, are not even acquainted with that form of the calculus which we use for our investigations. If we excel you in abstract knowledge, there is still less doubt that we are superior in practical happiness. For happiness consists in nothing so much as in a temper

of mind fitted for pleasure, or, to use a chemical phrase, in having a capacity for enjoyment. A man may satisfy himself of this, by travelling the same road when he is gay, and when he is gloomy. In the first case, the country will appear to him smiling, beautiful, or sublime ; in the second, it will seem tame, dull, or savage. Now the disposition of a Frenchman, is to see every thing *en beau*. I remember being in a wretched prison, guarded by Spaniards, who, any day in the week, might have taken a fancy to cut our throats ; yet we laughed all day and acted plays in the evening. Englishmen would have cut holes in the wall, and have been shot in the attempt to escape. If we know how to bear adversity, we also know how to enjoy prosperity. What in the world so good as the Restaurateurs and the Theatres of Paris ? What country can compare with France for wines, for dress, for dancing, and for plays ?

“ You will affirm that these sensual, and marketable enjoyments destroy the taste for domestic happiness ; but it is not so : no people are more attached than the French to their near relations ; and England cannot easily pro-

duce a mother more attached than Madame de Sevigné. It is the same with all the domestic relations ; and it is sufficient to go to the *cimetière* of Pere la Chaise, to be convinced how true the affection which the mothers, and sons, and sisters of France have for each other. How simple, and yet how tender the inscriptions upon the tombs ! There the sister goes to renew the tender recollection of her sister, and a son to place a garland over the grave of his mother. With you, the dead are never mentioned, never visited, and, I believe, seldom remembered. With the kindest feelings to their relations, the French, it is true, do not think it inconsistent to mix the sociability of a larger circle ; and they endeavour to be happy through the short period of existence allotted them ; whilst the English lose half their lives in becoming acquainted with those who are jumbled into the same half-century as themselves."

The Englishman began with the most diffident air, by refusing any comparison with the Spaniards, the Italians, or the Germans. The first, he said, had no political liberty, the second had not even independence, and the Germans could

scarcely be said to possess a classical literature: without every one of these advantages no nation could claim the pre-eminence. It was now his duty to show that the English nation was the wisest, the happiest, and the best. The only mode of estimating the rank of England in science and literature, was to enumerate the men she had produced. Whatever claims the Parisians (for Paris was France) might have to distinction in the annals of modern science, they would not dispute that Bacon was the first theoretical teacher, and Newton the greatest practical discoverer of sound philosophy. Nor could England be said to be inferior to any in the science of the day; namely chemistry; when Priestley and Cavendish made discoveries contemporary with those of Lavoisier, and Davy had pushed his researches to a distance which none of his rivals or fellow-labourers had reached.

“ If we turn from physical science, and look to history, which joining the investigation of fact, with the exercise of moral judgment, and the use of a cultivated style, seems to form the link between the exact sciences, and polite

literature, we shall find that Hume is the most profound, and Gibbon the most learned of modern historians. I will not compare them with De Thou or Rapin, D'Anquetil or Lacretelle; but I will assert, without hesitation, that they have far surpassed Davila, Guicciardin, Mariana, and Schiller.

“In the region of poetry we fear no comparison with France; in fact, except the tragedies of Racine, two or three of Voltaire, and some passages of Corneille, France has no poetry of the higher class: but even in those, have they any thing so sublime as the conceptions of Milton? have they any characters so true, or an invention so various as that of Shakspeare?

“If we look at the present state of literature, our superiority is still more apparent; the six poets of our day have no parallels in France.

“I have now to speak of the happiness of England. Good Heavens, what a fertile theme! No cold dissertation on the advantages of liberty, no detailed statement of the blessings derived from industry, can give an inhabitant of the Continent an idea of the well-being and

prosperity of our island ; every man can there think, and speak, and write as he pleases ; no previous censorship of the press prevents the general communication of facts and of ideas ; truth is not squeezed under the hat of a cardinal, or screwed by the vice of an officer of police, but carried into the broad day-light, and appreciated by the general judgment of enlightened men.

“ Nor have we stained the cause of liberty by innumerable murders and proscriptions ; our revolution was fruitful in great qualities and great virtues ; it produced but few crimes.

“ Perhaps of all the advantages our constitution has procured to us, none is more considerable than the freedom of industry.

“ The consequence is, a perfection in the arts of life, a solidity and completeness of happy comforts, which one of your countrymen,” said he to the Frenchman, “ called *La poesie du bien-être*. The English shopkeeper has ten times the comfort of the Spanish grandee, and is twenty times as independent as the Roman cardinal.

“ Nor have the English been less remarkable in foreign war ; during the late war they gained

by sea the battles of Camperdown, St. Vincent, Aboukir, Copenhagen, and Trafalgar.” — “ Oh, but then,” said the Frenchman, “ your nation are islanders, and cannot cope with us on the land.” — “ Talavera, and Barrosa, Salamanca, Vittoria, and Waterloo, are the answers to this objection.” —

When all the parties had been heard, I said, with the gravest face, and the most solemn tone I could put on, that I would read over my notes, and give my judgment another day. I did not say, however, that I would give the cause another hearing, as they do in the English chancery court, although it might have been done, in this case, without costing the parties a hundred pounds a-piece.

LITERARY TASTE.

Milan, 1818.

FROM the beginning of literary history no dispute seems to have been more eloquently maintained, or more often renewed than that between the admirers of great but irregular genius, and the pupils of exalted but chastened talent. Amongst ancient authors, the contest has chiefly turned upon the merits of Homer and Virgil, so that the partisans of the two opinions may be styled, for the sake of distinction, Homerians and Virgilians. The former adore that which is grand, original, and surprising; the latter delight in that which is beautiful, harmonious, and correct. Amongst the moderns, the two parties have found frequent occasions to display their differences. In Italy they have compared Ariosto and Tasso, and have lately renewed

the contest in a different shape, under the titles of *Classici* and *Romantici* ; in England they have opened the lists for Dryden and Pope ; and in Germany a great schism exists to this day between the followers of the English and the French school of tragedy. But however acute the weapons, however sharp the rencontres in this controversy may be, there is little chance that victory will entirely declare for either of the combatants. There is a difference in the constitution of mind of the respective parties. Those whose feelings are bold, whose desire of novelty is insatiable, whose adoration of genius is unbounded, will always be Homerians ; whilst those in whom the love of order is stronger than the conception of excellence, and delicacy of taste more prominent than enthusiasm, will as certainly become Virgilians. Hence, with some knowledge of the person, we might easily predict what would be his opinions. Thus, Voltaire, whose opinions of taste were drawn from the writers of the age of Louis XIV., gave the palm to Virgil against Homer ; whilst Mr. Fox, whose vigorous mind delighted to wander through a maze of invention, allotted a rank to

the Greek poet far higher than that which he gave to the Roman. Thus, Galileo, being an inventor, whose thoughts require variety and excitement in his reading consonant to his own pursuits, naturally prefers Ariosto to Tasso; whilst Metastasio, whose works are the result of labour and polish, declares his predilection in favour of the author of the Jerusalem. Reversing the rule we may form some estimate of a person by his taste; and this rule will apply to the fine arts as well as to poetry: for, except the servile herd who only imitate admiration, every one looks at a work of art, not to gain instruction, which is new, as in a work of science, but to excite a feeling he has previously entertained. Thus, he who delights in the Aurora of Guido, admires expression, dignity, and grace; but he who chooses Titian and Paul Veronese for his standard of perfection, is fond of rich colours and varied groupes. Those who have a warm admiration of the Greek temples will be, in all things, lovers of simplicity; and those who, in their hearts, prefer the churches of Bernini, are clearly of the same class with the boys who run after the Lord

Mayor's coach. The followers of Homer, Dante, Ariosto, and Shakspeare, will be men of bold character, and a springing and soaring fancy; whilst the partizans of Virgil, Tasso, and Racine, will be persons of refined discrimination, and little inventive genius. The former are fit to take Troy, like the Achilles of Homer; and the latter to escape from it with honour, like the Æneas of Virgil.

ON FIELD-SPORTS.

“ Image of war without its guilt.”

SOMERVILLE.

London, 1819.

It is mentioned somewhere that Dr. Paley, who was very fond of fishing, said, that if he was called upon to state the cause of his pleasure in it, he would be unable to do it. Yet it is not difficult to state the elements which compose the pleasure of fishing—the exercise of skill and power, and that degree of uncertainty and expectation which creates an interest, are all contained in fishing.

It would be more difficult to account entirely for the pleasure of hunting. The skill is displayed by the hounds, and the power by the horse; the death of the animal is no object, and the whole pleasure of the pursuit is in the pursuit itself: and yet there is something in

the cry of the hounds, the rapidity of motion, the excitement of air, and company, and emulation, which raises the spirits to a degree that hardly any thing else can do. It would appear as if the chace were natural to man.

There are many wise and excellent persons who think it wanton cruelty to indulge in any field-sports. If the conjecture hazarded above, that the pursuit of wild animals is part of our nature, has any foundation, nothing can be said against hunting by man in a savage state : and I know not why that should not be the case. A pike pursues a roach and sometimes bites off a part without killing it ; the stoat pursues the rabbit for half-a-day in the most regular manner, sure of sucking its blood at last ; even the earth-worm is a beast of prey. Why, then, should not man be allowed by his Creator to pursue certain animals which are his food ? But it is said, that, whatever may have been the case formerly in a savage state, field-sports are no longer pursued from hunger or necessity, but for pleasure and diversion. Foxes, as it is well known, are preserved only for the pleasure of hunting them. This is very true ; but does any

one think it would be any advantage to these animals that hunting should be abolished? The immediate consequence would be the destruction of all the foxes as a noxious race. Let us suppose a fox endowed, as he often is in fable, with the faculty of speech: he might then address Gray, or Cowper, or Gilbert Wakefield, in these terms: — “ Formerly we were allowed six months in the year to gain our livelihood, and bring up our families in quiet; many of us, it is true, were destroyed in the course of the winter, but that was the fortune of war, and the enemy did not beat up our quarters above half-a-dozen times in the whole year: upon the whole we lived a pleasant life; short and disturbed, perhaps, yet safe from trap or gun, and in the midst of plenty; but now that you have interfered, with your humanity, there has come out a general order to shoot and destroy us, wherever we may be found, till our whole ancient family is exterminated! And this is out of your special kindness!”

The same thing might be said of pheasants and hares, which certainly would not be in such plenty, were they not preserved for shooting.

Whenever I see a wood full of hares and pheasants in summer, I rejoice that, for the sake of two days' carnage in winter, men have consented to give life and enjoyment to so many beautiful and peaceful animals. I have said nothing here of the obvious topics of the benefits of field-sports to the body and mind of man, of the health and manliness they bestow, or the immense advantages of the country life they produce. I wished to show that, even as a benefit to the animals themselves, they ought to be encouraged.

AN AGREEABLE MAN.—SOCIETY IN LONDON.

London, 1819.

WHAT is meant by an agreeable man?

In Spain an agreeable man is he who is possessed of a good person, and an incessant flow of talk. The science of conversation is there in its infancy, and no distinction is made between him who talks much and him who talks well. The leading topic of a *bel esprit* is women; and the language itself is so formed as to confine praise or blame entirely to their bodily qualities. *Es buena moza*, literally “she is a good girl,” means she is a pretty girl. *Tiene merito*, “she has merit,” means she has some good points in her face or figure. Besides being able to decide the proper degree of merit which every woman possesses, the Spanish agreeable man is able to cover obscenity with the veil which is just thick enough to make

it admissible in good company, though even that is sometimes thrown aside like those which are worn on the Alameda. From this source he derives the principal fund of his conversation, and makes amends for a total ignorance on every kind of literature and politics. But then, he also knows the plays which are to be acted for the next month, and can tell, to a tittle, if a single indecent posture has been omitted in the fandango.

The agreeable man in Germany is quite a different sort of person. He is a gentleman who endeavours to make wit and gallantry after the most approved models of the age of Louis XIV. But his specific gravity being much greater than that of the French nation, he is, in fact, as little like M. de Coulanges or St. Evremont as can well be imagined. His little anecdotes are drawn from the Roman history, or, at best, from the Seven Years' War; his remarks and observations are conscientiously sincere, but insufferably dull; and his wit always disposes to melancholy.

In Italy an agreeable man is a much pleasanter person: his manners are particularly

civil; he often has a good taste in the fine arts and in polite literature, and, perhaps, an agreeable talent for music; but there is a feebleness and effeminacy in his tone of thinking, which finally wearies; and his conversation is the pace of a *manège* horse, trained till he has lost all freedom of action.

Yet, it must be owned, that there are a great many young men who are exceptions to this rule; it is easy to see, however, that they are exceptions. Their long dishevelled hair, their wild rolling eyes, their vehement action, their loud harangues in society, their unusual language, and more unusual opinions, show at once that they are not formed after the general rule of national character.

If we go from Italy to England we shall find that the agreeable man gets more reputation, more eating, and more drinking, in return for his talk than anywhere else. He is perpetually invited to dinner, where from ten to five-and-twenty people are invited expressly to meet him; and, after all, it often happens that he is sullen or unwell, and will not speak a word from the beginning of dinner till the end. But if he

should happen to be in spirits, he often talks so loud, or so disputatiously, that you are forced to bow to his opinions till after coffee. But if a rival wit has been asked to meet him, there generally arises a furious contest for superiority ; each tries to gain a hearing for himself only, and each attacks his opponent with arguments too important for the hour of digestion.

France, perhaps, affords the best models of an agreeable man. In them we see the most refined politeness towards others, mixed with a most perfect confidence in themselves — a sprightliness which enlivens all around, and produces as much light by reflection as by radiation — a skill in placing every topic in the situation which alone can make it amusing in conversation — a grace in treating the most frivolous matters, a lightness in touching the most serious, and a quickness in passing from one to the other, which to all other Europeans must seem quite unattainable. They console themselves by saying the French are frivolous, by which they mean that they interest themselves in little frivolous concerns ; but they forget to mention that they are the same people who

marched into Lisbon and Moscow, and perfected the discoveries of Newton.

Such are the prominent characters in the conversation of their respective countries. But it may happen, that, although individuals may exist in a society, endowed with every power of entertaining and enlightening, yet the forms of society may be such that it is very difficult to obtain the full advantage of their superior qualities. This difficulty is the misfortune of London, where there are more men of cultivated understanding, of refined wit, and literary or political eminence, than in any metropolis of Europe. Yet it is so contrived, that there is little freedom, little intimacy, and little ease in London society. “To love some persons very much, and see often those that I love,” says the old Duchess of Marlborough, “is the greatest happiness I can enjoy.” But in London it is equally difficult to get to love any body very much, or to see often those that we have loved before. There are such numbers of acquaintances, such a succession of engagements, that the town resembles Vauxhall, where the dearest friends may walk round and round all night without

ever meeting. If you see at dinner a person whose manners and conversation please you, you may wish in vain to become more intimate; for the chance is, that you will not meet so as to converse a second time for three months, when the dice-box of society may, perhaps, turn up again the same numbers. Not that it is to be inferred that you may not barely see the same features again; it is possible that you may catch a glimpse of them on the other side of St. James's Street, or see them near to you at a crowded rout, without a possibility of approaching. Hence it is, that those who live in London are totally indifferent to one another; the waves follow so quick that any vacancy is immediately filled up, and the want is not perceived. At the same time the well-bred civility of modern times, and the example of some "very popular people," have introduced a shaking of hands, a pretended warmth, a sham cordiality, into the manners of the cold and the warm alike — the dear friend, and the acquaintance of yesterday. Hence, we hear continually such conversations as the following:—"Ah! how d'ye do? I'm delighted to see you! How

is Mrs. M——?” — “ She is very well, thank you.” — “ Has she any more children?” — “ Any more! I have only been married three months. I see you are talking of my former wife — she has been dead these three years.” — Or “ My dear friend, how d’ye do, — you have been out of town some time — where have you been — in Norfolk?” — “ No, I have been two years in India.” —

Thus, ignorant of one another’s interest and occupations, the friendships of London contain nothing more tender than a visiting-card. Nor is it much better, — indeed it is much worse, — if you renounce the world, and determine to live only with your relations and nearest connections: if you go to see them at one o’clock they are not up; at two the room is full of indifferent acquaintance, who can talk over the ball of the night before, and of course are sooner listened to than yourself; at three they are gone shopping; at four they are in the Park; at five and at six they are out; at seven they are dressing; at eight they are dining with two dozen friends; at nine and ten the same; at eleven they are dressing for the ball;

and at twelve, when you are going to bed, they are gone into society for the evening. Thus you are left in solitude: you soon begin again to try the world; — let us see what it produces.

The first inconvenience of a London life, is the late hour of dinner. To pass the day *impransus*, and then to sit down to a great dinner at eight o'clock, is entirely against the first dictates of common sense, and common stomachs. Some learned persons, indeed, endeavour to support this practice by precedent, and quote the Roman supper; but those suppers were at three o'clock in the afternoon, and ought to be a subject of contempt, instead of imitation, in Grosvenor Square. Women, however, are not so irrational as men, in London, and generally sit down to a substantial luncheon, at three or four: if men would do the same, the meal at eight might be lightened of many of its weighty dishes, and conversation would be no loser; for it is not to be concealed, that conversation suffers great interruption from the manner in which English dinners are managed: first the host and hostess (or her unfortunate co-adjutor) are employed during three

parts of dinner, in doing the work of the servants, helping fish, or carving large pieces of venison to twenty hungry souls, to the total loss of the host's powers of amusement, and the entire disfigurement of the fair hostess's face. Much time is also lost by the attention every one is obliged to pay, in order to find out (which he can never do if he is short-sighted) what dishes are at the other end of the table; and if a guest wishes for a glass of wine, he must peep through the Apollos and Cupids of the *plateau*, in order to find some one to drink with him; otherwise he must wait till some one asks him, which will probably happen in succession, so that after having had no wine for half an hour, he will have to drink five glasses in five minutes. Convenience teaches that the best manner of enjoying society at dinner, is to leave every thing to servants that servants can do; so that you may have no farther trouble than to accept of the dishes that are offered to you, and to drink at your own time, of the wines which are handed round. An English dinner, on the contrary, seems to presume before-hand on the silence, dulness, and

stupidity of the guests, and to have provided little interruptions, like the jerks which the chaplain gives to the Archbishop, to prevent his going to sleep during sermon.

Some time after dinner comes the time of going to a ball, or a rout ; but this is sooner said than done : it often requires as much time to go from St. James's Square to Cleveland Row, as to go from London to Hounslow. It would require volumes to describe the disappointment which occurs on arriving in the brilliant mob of a ball-room. Sometimes, as it has been before said, a friend is seen squeezed like yourself, at another end of the room without a possibility of your communicating except by signs ; and as the whole arrangement of the society is regulated by mechanical pressure, you may happen to be pushed against those to whom you do not wish to speak, whether bores, slight acquaintances, or determined enemies. Confined by the crowd, and stifled by the heat, and dazzled by the light, all powers of intellect are lost ; wit loses its point, and sagacity its observation ; indeed, the limbs are so crushed, and the tongue so parched, that, except par-

ticularly well-drest ladies, all are in the case of the traveller, Dr. Clarke, when he says in the plains of Syria, that some might blame him for not making moral reflections on the state of the country ; but that he must own the heat quite deprived him of all power of thought.

Hence it is, that the conversation you hear around you, is generally nothing more than “Have you been here long?”—“Have you been at Mrs. Hotroom’s?”—“Are you going to Lady Deathsqueeze’s?” Hence, too, Madame de Stael said, very justly, to an Englishman, “*Dans vos routs le corps fait plus de frais que l’esprit.*” But even if there are persons of a constitution robust enough to talk, they yet do not dare to do so, as twenty heads are forced into the compass of one square foot ; and even when, to your great delight, you see a person to whom you have much to say, and, by fair means or foul, elbows and toes, knees and shoulders, have got near them, they often dismiss you with shaking you by the hand, and saying “My dear Mr. — how do you do?” and then, continue a conversation with a person whose ear is three inches nearer. At one o’clock, however, the crowd diminishes ;

and if you are not tired by the five or six hours of playing at company, which you have already had, you may be very comfortable for the rest of the evening.

It has been said very justly of science, that the profound discoveries of the greatest philosophers of one age become the elements of knowledge to the youth of the next. It is nearly the reverse in conversation. The anecdotes which form the buz of card parties and dinner parties in one century, are in the lapse of a hundred years, and sometimes less, transplanted into quarto volumes, and go to increase the stock of learning of the most grave and studious persons in the nation; a story repeated by the Duchess of Portsmouth's waiting woman to Lord Rochester's valet, forms a subject of investigation for a philosophical historian; and you may hear an assembly of scholars and authors, discussing the validity of a piece of scandal invented by a maid of honour more than two centuries ago, and repeated to an obscure writer by Queen Elizabeth's house-keeper.

The appetite for remains of all kinds, has

certainly increased of late to a most surprising extent; every thing which belongs to a great man is eagerly hunted out, and constantly published. If Madame de Sevigné wrote some letters when she was half asleep; if Dr. Johnson took the pains of setting down what occurred to him before he was breeched, this age is sure to have the benefit of seeing these valuable works on hot-pressed paper: all that good writers threw by as imperfect, all that they wished to be concealed from the world, is now edited in volumes twice as magnificent as their chief works. Still greater is the avidity for *ana*: it is a matter of the greatest interest, to see the letters of every busy trifler. Yet who does not laugh at such men? To write to our relations and friends on events which concern their interests and affections, is a worthy employment for the heart and head of a civilised man; but to engrave upon the tittle-tattle of the day, with all the labour and polish which the richest gem could deserve, is a contemptible abuse of the pen, paper, and time which is on our hands.

It must be confessed, however, that knowledge of this kind is very entertaining; and here and

there amongst the rubbish, we find hints which may give the philosopher a clue to important facts, and afford to the moralist a better analysis of the human mind, than a whole library of metaphysics.

ON PLAYS.

Paris.

THE dramatic art, when carried to perfection, may be defined to be that of exhibiting human nature in a point of view, either affecting or amusing. If we adopt this definition, it will not appear wonderful that the English should have succeeded best in tragedy, and the French in comedy. The English, fond of deep emotion, and reflecting long upon their own sensations, have pourtrayed with a truth which seemed scarcely attainable, the character and conduct of individuals whom fortune placed in the highest rank, and exposed to the most stormy trials. But in proportion to their success in this branch of art, has been their failure in the department of comedy. As they are little accustomed to display their feelings in society, authors

have been obliged to supply, by extravagant plots and eccentric characters, the want of accurate portraits, and to borrow from fancy the interest which observation could not afford.

The French, on the other hand, who act as it were from the passion of the moment, who brood over no sorrow, and analyse no passion, gave to the workshop of the tragedian only the undivided mass of our common affections. Corneille spoke only to our pride and courage; Racine borrowed from Greece his fable and his sentiments; Voltaire, endeavouring to improve upon them, has been more rhetorical than natural. But if genius and eloquence have not been sufficient to furnish France with a perfect example of tragedy, the easy tone of society, the grace and wit of ordinary conversation, and even the egotism of her people, have contributed to form the most perfect comedies the world ever saw. Moliere might justly boast of having given to the moderns a claim to perfection in a very difficult and delightful branch of literature. But as I am conscious that both the English and French nations claim pre-eminence in both

lines, I must illustrate my opinions more at large.

It is quite superfluous to say any thing of the merit of Shakspeare. Had it required any farther illustration, the able comment of Schlegel would fully serve to place it clearly before the eyes of the world. His work would be still more valuable, did he not adopt the prejudices of an Englishman, and defend the faults as much as he praises the beauties of his favourite author. No sophistry, however ingenious, will be sufficient to persuade an unprejudiced person, that the unities are of no use in assisting the illusion of the theatre. It is idle to say that there is no illusion, or that — “the truth is, the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players. They came to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation. The lines relate to some action, and an action must be in some place; but the different actions that complete a story, may be in places very remote from each other; and where is the absurdity

of allowing that space to represent, first Athens, and then Sicily, which was always known to be neither Athens nor Sicily, but a modern theatre?" *

As well might it be said that the ancient bagwig and sword were as suitable to the part of Cato, as the Roman dress; since every one knew he was an Englishman, and not a Roman. Indeed, the argument extends to the abolition of all dramatic representation; for why should not a single person read out a play as well as or better than a motley company? But the fact is, a very lively image is presented to the senses, and the mind derives great pleasure from pursuing the train of associations which are naturally excited by the events and passions represented. The knowledge that the scene is not real, serves to prevent the distress from becoming too intense, and thus an opportunity is obtained of indulging the sensations of sympathy, pity, love of virtue, and indignation against vice, which nature has made so pleasing to us, without the pain that usually accompanies them.

* Johnson, Preface to Shakspeare.

But in this course of emotion, it is a sad blow to the imagination to find on a sudden that the hero has travelled from Peru to Spain, or has grown twelve years older in the course of a minute.

I will not here enter farther on the long-disputed question of the unities, but will just venture to propose a compromise.

If, on the one hand, a disregard of all proximity of time and place must weaken, if not break the thread of imagination, on the other, too strict an attention to these objects either limits the author to a very narrow field of subjects, or induces him to break another great unity — the agreement of the person and the action with the time and the scene. An audience which is pleased with a hero, “*enfant au premier acte, barbon au dernier*,” may be justly called barbarous; but that which requires Mithridate and his sons to carry on all their schemes against one another in the same place, must be owned to be endowed with no very warm imagination. Be this as it may, Shakspeare’s fault in this respect seems to be that of the age, and approaches that of the early

painters, who put David, offering himself to fight; David, throwing the sling; and David, cutting off the head of Goliath, in the same picture.

The other fault which I mentioned, that of mixing comedy and tragedy, has been often defended; it has, in fact, the merit of relieving the mind, oppressed by too long a succession of sad scenes, and makes a tragedy palatable to ordinary minds. It is like the gas in mineral waters, which makes steel supportable to weak stomachs. But does it not also interrupt the interest? and does it not prevent the existence of any strong emotion? Shakspeare has best answered these questions, by diminishing the number of such scenes in *Othello*, *Lear*, and *Macbeth*.

The French tragedy may be fairly praised for beautiful poetry, for high sentiments, and even for grand situations. But it has one capital defect—it is not true to nature. The French, as a German writer truly observed, have painted passions and not characters. We have love in one play, ambition in another, but we have nowhere man. Shakspeare has described us more

truly; yielding first to one feeling and then to another, and giving way to the master passion only after a struggle which exhibits the inmost nerves of the human heart. The Macbeth of Racine would have uttered magnificent verses and eloquent reasons, but he would not have been the individual whom we are all intimately acquainted with. In making these remarks, I would not be thought to undervalue the real merits of the French tragedies: on the contrary, I go to see them repeatedly with great pleasure. To hear the noblest sentiments of man embodied in the elevated, and yet natural diction of Racine, and pronounced by Talma or Mademoiselle Duchesnois, is to me a high gratification. But I regret that somewhat of the likeness to human action is lost by the over-attention which has been paid to the regularity of the plot, the uniform succession of situation, and the copiousness, if not prolixity, of the speeches. Berenice is an instance of all these faults: there is but one incident, and all the scenes are but different ways of viewing the same object. It would be endless to enumerate the faults into which the French authors have

been led by their mistaken view of tragedy. The best way, perhaps, is to consider a tragedy of Voltaire and one of Shakspeare. In doing this I own that some disadvantages must be incurred. The poet who could please the enlightened audience of Paris, after Corneille and Racine had been long undisputed sovereigns of the stage, must excel in purity of taste the author who wrote for a coarse and uncritical people, and who left his plays as rude as he first wrote them. But the question that should be considered is, which of the two was the closest copier of nature? not which was the nicest observer of art. The two tragedies I shall take are by no means the best of either author, but they both belong to the first rank, and are known all over Europe:—*Le Fanatisme*, or *Mahomet le Prophete*; and *Hamlet*, Prince of Denmark.

Now, to take *Le Fanatisme* first, it might be worth while to consider whether it is a good mode to set out with proclaiming that a tragedy is to represent a particular passion. But without spending any time in discussing a question,

amply discussed and justly decided elsewhere *, I imagine we may safely say, that to represent the chief of a religion, different from our own, in the most odious colours; to paint him as committing a great crime, of which there is no record; to describe him, contrary to the tenor of history, as a monster of cold-blooded vice, — this, we may surely conclude, is not the best way to extinguish bigotry. But even if it were so, I doubt if so pious a purpose could justify a writer in teaching his audience to detest a character who was not detestable. Mahomet seems to have been a man, in whom virtue and vice were mixed in the ordinary proportions. He found his nation idolaters; the religion of the Jews, and even that of the Christians, perverted and corrupted. He endeavoured, without destroying their faith, to persuade them that the unity of God, was the vital principle of

* See the reviews of Miss Baillie's Plays on the Passions, in the Edinburgh Review.

religion, and that the particular articles of their creed were not necessary to obtain mercy at the judgment seat of Heaven. But, having met with success, he became ambitious, and declared that all who did not embrace his faith should be obliged to do so by the sword. One of his early commandments was to observe chastity; but his passions got the better of him, and not satisfied with his own wives, he took possession of another person's. But that he was a cool hypocrite, only intent on empire and lust, is what history by no means teaches us. And there is no example which poets can give, so mischievous as to distort the qualities of a great man, and to make his name unjustly odious to the world, for the sake of a paltry stage-effect. *

* “ After the conquest of Mecca, the Mahomet of Voltaire imagines and perpetrates the most horrid crimes. The poet confesses that he is not supported by the truth of history, and can only alledge *que celui qui fait la guerre a sa patrie au nom de Dieu est capable de tout*. The maxim is neither charitable nor philosophic; and some reverence is surely due to the fame of heroes and the religion of nations.” Gibbon, vol. v. p. 239, note, 4to.

But Voltaire having given the reins to his invention on this subject, we must suppose that his fiction is at least interesting and engaging. Quite the contrary. The original story is told by Gibbon in a few words, as follows:—"At the house of Zeid, his freedman and adopted son, he beheld, in a loose undress, the beauty of Zeineb (Zeid's wife), and burst forth into an ejaculation of devotion and desire. The servile, or grateful freedman, understood the hint, and yielded without hesitation to the love of his benefactor." Out of this story Voltaire weaves the most horrible tale: he makes Zeid the brother of Zeineb, and the son of Zopire, whom Mahomet is said to have persecuted, and he then makes Zeid, ignorant of his birth, murder his father, in order to become the husband of his sister; whilst Mahomet, who urges him on, intends to sacrifice him to his own passion for Zeineb. A plot so horrible can create nothing but disgust. Nor does it serve to exculpate Voltaire, as he imagines, that Zeid is ignorant of the crimes he commits. The spectator's knowledge of the real state of the case must prevent his feeling any interest in the developement

of the plot. He cannot sympathise with Zeid, for that were to wish for incest to be committed. Mahomet can only excite horror. Zopire, indeed, awakens our pity; but the old idolater is an inferior character. Nor is it a sufficient justification of the plot to say, that facts still more horrible are recorded by history, or that the moral of the play is to prevent assassination committed from the impulse of fanaticism. There are many facts in history unfit for the stage; the sack of Jerusalem by the Crusaders, for instance, which was a direct consequence of fanaticism. An event may be too horrible to derive lustre from the embellishments of art and the ornaments of poetry. Nor does an assassination prove any thing *per se* against fanaticism. Brutus killed Cæsar, who, perhaps, was his father; but that proves nothing against the love of liberty. Assassination is a crime which proceeds often from reason perverted, and from feelings too warmly excited, either in a bad cause or a good one. The crime should be met with punishment and combated by reason: but the motive ought

not to be held up indiscriminately to our abhorrence.

The want of sympathy in the fate of the chief actors in this play, is not compensated by the fidelity of the characters to human nature. Of characters, indeed, there is only one, viz. Mahomet himself. Had Shakspeare undertaken to paint such a character, he probably would have drawn him as others of the same kind are known to have been, sometimes enthusiast and sometimes hypocrite; speaking in public the language of imposture, and even in his most private moments excusing the indulgence of his passions by some specious view of the glory of God and the happiness of mankind. Above all, he would have taken care to have made the ambition and the licentiousness of Mahomet appear in all his actions, and be abjured in all his words. Now the method of Voltaire has been completely different: not only does he avow his odious vices, but he calls them by their names, and makes epigrams and antitheses upon them as if he were the Pope or Dr. Prideaux. He has not

been on the scene five minutes, when he says to Omar, one of his companions,

“ Je viens mettre a profit les erreurs de la terre.”

And again —

“ L’amour seul me console ; il est ma recompense,
L’objet de mes travaux, l’idole que j’encense,
Le Dieu de Mahomet ; et cette passion
Est egale aux fureurs de mon ambition.”

Be it observed, that his real language was so very different, that when he asked his kindred which of them would be his lieutenant, he said, “ I know no man in all Arabia, who can offer his kindred a more excellent thing, than I now do you : I offer you happiness both in this life, and that which is to come, &c.” *

But let us suppose, that this confidence is made like Sir Walter Raleigh’s to Sir Christopher Hatton, in the Critick, for the sake of the audience. The next personage who comes

* Sale’s Koran, Prel. Discourse, p. 57.

on, however, is Mahomet's capital enemy. To him surely he will assume the Prophet. But no ; to him he says —

“ Vois quel est Mahomet ; nous sommes seuls, écoute
Je suis ambitieux ; tout homme l'est sans doute ;” &c.

“ Il faut un nouveau culte, et faut de nouveaux fers ;
Il faut un nouveau Dieu pour l'aveugle univers.”

——“ je connais ton peuple, il a besoin d'erreur ;”

——“ il faut m'aider a tromper l'univers.”

Omar now returns, and Mahomet, after concerting with him a parricide exclaims —

“ Allons, consultons bien mon intérêt, ma haine,
L'amour, l'indigne amour, qui malgre moi m'en-
traîne,

Et la religion, a qui tout est sœumis,

Et la nécessité, par qui tout est permis.”

I pass over other horrible and unnatural sentiments of Mahomet, and the scene where a young girl, otherwise interesting, consents that her lover, as the price of her hand, should become an assassin, in order to give the last words of Mahomet, pronounced before Omar

and his suite ; that is to say, those whom it is his chief business to persuade of his divine mission.

“ Dieu que j’ai fait servir au malheur des humains,
Adorable instrument de mes affreux desseins,
Toi que j’ai blasphémé, mais que je crains encore,
Je me sens condamné, quand l’univers m’adore.
Je brave en vain les traits dont je me sens frapper,
J’ai trompé les mortels et je ne puis me tromper.’,”

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Je dois regir en Dieu l’univers prévenu ;
Mon empire est détruit se l’homme est reconnu.”

Such is the language of Mahomet, and I appeal to the lowest conjuror who preaches his art in the streets of Naples, if he could hope to continue his trade, if he did not put a thicker veil on his impostures.

I come now to the tragedy of Hamlet, which has not pleased some of the best judges, even in our own country : Sir Joshua Reynolds is reported to have said, that he thought Shakespeare, having a great many fine things in his common-place book, invented the character of

Hamlet, as a way of bringing them all out. Dr. Johnson delivers his opinion of the conduct of this play, in the following words: "The conduct is, perhaps, not wholly secure against objections. The action is, indeed, for the most part, in continual progression, but there are some scenes which neither forward nor retard it. Of the feigned madness of Hamlet, there appears no adequate cause, for he does nothing which he might not have done with the reputation of sanity. He plays the madman most, when he treats Ophelia with so much rudeness, which seems to be useless and wanton cruelty.

"Hamlet is, through the whole piece, rather an instrument than an agent. After he has, by the stratagem of the play, convicted the king, he makes no attempt to punish him; and his death is at last effected by an incident which Hamlet had no part in producing. The catastrophe is not very happily produced; the exchange of weapons is rather an expedient of necessity, than a stroke of art. A scheme might easily have been formed to kill Hamlet with the dagger, and Laertes with the bowl.

"The poet is accused of having shown little

regard to poetical justice, and may be charged with equal neglect of poetical probability. The apparition left the regions of the dead to little purpose; the revenge which he demands is not obtained, but by the death of him that was required to take it; and the gratification which would arise from the destruction of an usurper, and a murderer, is abated by the untimely death of Ophelia, the young, the beautiful, the harmless, and the pious."

Now it appears to me, that Shakspeare proposed as his subject the workings of a noble, but irresolute mind. For the purpose of his plan, he places him where he is called upon to perform an act of revenge on his uncle, for the murder of his father, and incestuous marriage of his mother. Let a man of feeling conceive such a situation, and then tell me if the following conduct is unnatural. In order to perplex his mind, the author makes the appearance of a ghost the only evidence of his mother's guilt. Hamlet's first purpose is instant revenge; but the thoughts of so bloody an action, on the faith of an apparition, reduce him to an indecision which is the spring of his misfortunes, and of all the subsequent events of the play. The al-

ternative, on the one hand, of murdering his uncle without cause; and on the other, of suffering the daily intercourse and existence of a man who may be the poisoner of his father, and the seducer of his mother, drives him into so black, so melancholy, so thoughtful a humour, that he is glad to escape observation and detection, by pretending madness which is only half-feigned. In this state of mind he sees the king at prayers, the design of killing him occurs, but his doubts and troubles stay his hand, and he contents himself with the illusion that he only forbears, because assassination would then be mercy. The play is an invention for discovering whether his uncle be guilty, which, though it convince him at the time, is far from determining him to commit a deed so bloody. He pauses on self-destruction as the term of misery, and hence the soliloquy, "To be or not to be." One very fine occasion for showing the irresolution of Hamlet, is taken when the player bursts into tears on reciting the story of Hecuba —

"O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I," &c.

Another still finer is in the fourth act, when

Hamlet sees Fortinbras pass by with an army to conquer "a little patch of ground." The soliloquy he makes on this occasion is so complete a view of his character, that it is worth while to give it entire.

"How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,
If his chief good, and market of his time,
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.
Sure, He that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before, and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unus'd. Now, whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on the event, ——
A thought, which, quarter'd, hath but one part,
wisdom,
And, ever, three parts coward, — I do not know
Why yet I live to say, *This thing's to do*;
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and
means
To do't. Examples, gross as earth, exhort me:
Witness, this army, of such mass, and charge,
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit, with divine ambition puffed,
Makes mouths at the invisible event;

Exposing what is mortal, and unsure,
To all that fortune, death, and danger, dare,
Even for an egg-shell. Rightly, to be great
Is not to stir without great argument;
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw,
When honour's at the stake. How stand I then,
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,
Excitements of my reason, and my blood,
And let all sleep? while, to my shame, I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That, for a fantasy, and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds; fight for a plot,
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough, and continent,
To hide the slain? — O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!"

It has been observed, very justly, that his behaviour to Ophelia, the most outrageous thing in the play, might arise from his being stung with the suspicion of her treachery to him; his speech to his mother is severe, but not unnatural; in the middle of it, a new suspicion of a traitor rouses his hasty passion, and he pierces the arras; he does not appear to feel much for his crime — his mind was fixed upon a greater

object, and Polonius had become hateful to him by his time-servingness. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern he suspects as being accessaries to a plot for his murder, and therefore plots against their lives in return. On coming back to Denmark, passion again overpowers him at the speech of Laertes, and the taunt thrown out against him, when he is conscious of having loved Ophelia, and of being afflicted at her death. The king conspires a second time against the life of Laertes, and Hamlet is wounded. Enraged at the apparent foul play, he rushes in, seizes his antagonist's foil, and wounds him with it. — Is this very improbable? Informed of the treachery, he instantly dispatches the king, and thus the play ends. Upon the whole, the chain of events is well connected. Hamlet, weak, though hasty, gives reason to suspect his intentions, but continually delays his execution. The king sees through his madness, and endeavours to destroy his life. Hamlet appears again, yet irresolute. The king plots again, and with more success; but Hamlet has life remaining to revenge his own death, not his father's. The catastrophe is a natural suite of the characters

who are represented. Those who wish to see the play regularly conducted to an end by Hamlet, ask for that which is contrary to the character to be represented. The very thing to be shown is, that Hamlet by his irresolution is "rather an instrument than an agent." Dr. Johnson might as well have asked that Othello should be cured of his unreasonable jealousy. But then, it may be objected, no interest can attach to a play where the hero can never resolve to act. To this I might answer in the words of an able critic — "where the events described, or represented, spring, in their natural order of succession, from one source, the sentiments of sympathy which they excite, will all verge to one centre, and be connected by one chain."

But a still better answer may be given by mentioning the fact, that Hamlet is acted as frequently, if not more so, than any play on the English stage. And thus Shakspeare has at the same time exhibited one of the finest, but most difficult characters it is possible to pourtray; expressed the most philosophical sentiments in the language of poetry; and animated the

whole in a play, which the audience is always glad to hear repeated. *

We come next to consider the comedies of the two nations. It has been said that tragedy exalts our nature, and that comedy lowers it. But this is not true—I know not that the *Wonder* lowers human nature more than *Phèdre*—that we have a less idea of the dignity of man from the character of Charles Surface than from that of Iago. Tragedy places odious passions in the most odious light, and comedy throws a strong ridicule upon the foibles of our nature.

The comedies of Spain were the first in Europe to emerge from the barbarity of the rude ages, but they are far from exhibiting such a resemblance of human nature as has since been introduced into the drama by the English and French. The *dramatis personæ* commonly consist of a very few characters: an old father, a daughter, a lover, and his servant, who is the confidant of his master and the buffoon of the play. The

* After I had written these remarks on *Hamlet*, I found that many of them had been anticipated in Dr. Drake's able work on Shakspeare.

intrigue is generally produced by making two or more mistresses and two or more lovers mistake each other's persons and houses, and fall into a series of mistakes which complicate their affairs, and create an interest by the extreme ingenuity and perplexity of the plot. But in all these comedies there is no variety; but one view of human life, and no display of character. A few comedies of Calderon, Lopez de Vega, and Moreto, however, such as *Lo Cierto por lo Dudoso*, *Lo Moza del Cantaro*, *El Desden por el Desden*, and some others, might be mentioned, which are not liable to this censure. The English and the French comedies of the time of Charles II. and Lewis XIV. are both founded upon the Spanish basis; but the French have been more successful than the English authors. Congreve, Wycherley, and Farquhar, adopted the intriguing plot of the Spanish plays; but, instead of copying the formal and heroic gallantry of the Spanish customs, they adapted their pieces to the licentious manners of our own Court. Hence they have lost much of their interest. Not all the wit of some of the wittiest writers, scattered without stint upon their dialogue, can make us feel an interest in

ladies of fashion, who come in disguise to the Park, to hold conversations with young men of the town in language too gross and indelicate to be now tolerated in any society in the kingdom. We can feel neither pleasure nor pain at the misfortune of husbands, who seem to be quite as deserving of favour as the lovers ; and a marriage in masks is too remote from present manners, to give us any picture of real life. We see too plainly, that the whole is an imitation of the transient forms and manners of a court which is gone by, and which, being founded on the most odious selfishness, the most shameless want of principle, and the total absence of every affection of the heart, has left nothing to cause it to be remembered. Moliere, on the other hand, laid his foundations deep upon human nature itself. His great comedies are founded on the vices of avarice and hypocrisy, and on the foibles of affectation of rank, affectation of knowledge, affectation of sickness, which are always to be found in society. His genius was of the highest order, capable of seizing every shade of character, and of placing it in the point of view in which it was

best calculated to excite ridicule. His best comedies are a complete history of the vices or foibles they are intended to represent; and his plots, instead of being a mere tissue of fortuitous incidents, are a well-conducted scheme of exhibiting, in all its parts, that quality of human nature, which forms his subject. He has done this sometimes with the dignity of a satirist, and sometimes with the playfulness and almost the buffoonery of a clown; and hence he has been reproached by some with being a didactic poet, and by others with being a mere farce-writer. The latter of these charges is not worth speaking of, and the former might be dismissed with the reflection, that the “*School for Scandal*,” which is, perhaps, the best of our comedies, contains imitations of no less than three of the comedies of Moliere. The design and the character of Joseph Surface are evidently taken from the *Tartuffe*, the scandal scene from the *Misanthrope*, and the broker scene from the *Avare*. But it may be as well to say a few words on the charge of dulness, which has been so boldly brought forward against the *Tartuffe* and the *Misanthrope*.

There is no greater advantage to the literature of a nation than to have a species of amusement, which is different from the common fare of other nations. The comedies in verse of the French may be esteemed to be of this sort; they have a plot which is capable of being to the full as interesting as that of any other comedy, and finally they are the most refined of any dramatic spectacle. The only criticism that can be made is, that for persons to speak verse is out of nature; but this is a question which must be decided by the nation before whom these comedies are represented; for it is not, in fact, more out of nature that verse should be spoken, than that so much wit and so many incidents should occur in so short a time: the whole, it must be recollected, is a voluntary illusion. If, indeed, the sentiments spoken were heroic or extravagant, the whole world would be competent to object; but every one must agree that they are not different from those which a comic writer of England might put into prose. I know not why the higher comedy may not as well be put into rhyme as our tragedy into blank verse. It may

be said that comedy is intended to represent real life, which tragedy is not; but, in fact, the School for Scandal is no more like ordinary society than Hamlet is like the real life of kings and queens. It being once allowed that rhyme may be introduced in comedy, we gain the advantage of hearing very good poetry recited by good actors. What, for example, can be more like good familiar poetry, than the following observations on dress?

Ariste. Toujours au plus grand nombre on doit
s'accommoder,
Et jamais il ne faut se faire regarder.
L'un et l'autre excès choque, et tout homme bien
sage
Doit faire des habits ainsi que de langage ;
N'y rien trop affecter, et, sans empressement,
Suivre ce que l'usage y fait de changement.
Mon sentiment n'est pas qu'on prenne la méthode
De ceux qu'on voit toujours renchérir sur la mode;
Et qui, dans cet excès dont ils sont amoureux,
Seroient fâchés qu'un autre eût été plus loin qu'eux ;
Mais je tiens qu'il est mal, sur quoi que l'on se
fonde,
De fuir obstinément ce que suit tout le monde,

Et qu'il vaut mieux souffrir d'être au nombre des
fous,
Que du sage parti se voir seul contre tous.

Or, if we wished to read a satire upon evil-speaking, what could we ask better than the following dialogues between Ariste and Valere, and Ariste and Cleon, from the *Méchant* of Gresset?

ARISTE. VALERE.

Valere. Lui refuseriez vous l'esprit ? j'ai peine à le croire —

Ariste. Mais à l'esprit méchant je ne vois point de gloire.

Si vous saviez combien cet esprit est aisé,
Combien il en faut peu, comme il est méprisé !
Le plus stupide obtient la même réussite.
Eh ! pourquoi tant de gens ont-ils ce plat mérite ?
Stérilité de l'ame, et de ce naturel
Agréable, amusant, sans bassesse et sans fiel.
On dit l'esprit commun : par son succès bizarre
La méchanceté prouve à quel point il est rare :
Ami du bien, de l'ordre, et de l'humanité,
Le véritable esprit marche avec la bonté.
Cléon n'offre à nos yeux qu'une fausse lumière.

La réputation des mœurs est la première ;
Sans elle, croyez-moi, tout succès est trompeur.
Mon estime toujours commence par le cœur.
Sans lui l'esprit n'est rien, et, malgré vos maximes,
Il produit seulement des erreurs et des crimes —
Fait pour être chéri, ne serez-vous cité
Que pour le complaisant d'un homme détesté

V. Je vois tout le contraire ; on le recherche,
on l'aime :

Je voudrois que chacun me détestât de même.
On se l'arrache, au moins, je l'ai vu quelquefois
A des soupers divins retenu pour un mois :
Quand il est à Paris il ne peut y suffire.
Me direz-vous qu'on hait un homme qu'on desire ?

A. Que dans ses procédés l'homme est incon-
séquent !

On recherche un esprit dont on hait le talent ;
On applaudit aux traits du méchant qu'on abhorre ;
Et loin de le proscrire on l'encourage encore.
Mais convenez aussi qu'avec ce mauvais ton,
Tous ces gens dont il est l'oracle ou le bouffon,
Craignent pour eux le sort des absens qu'il leur livre,
Et que tous avec lui seroient fâchés de vivre :
On le voit une fois, il peut être applaudi ;
Mais quelqu'un voudroit-il en faire son ami ?

V. On le craint ; c'est beaucoup.

A. Mérite pitoyable :

Pour les esprits sensés est-il donc redoutable ?
C'est ordinairement à de foibles rivaux
Qu'il adresse les traits de ses mauvais propos.
Quel honneur trouvez-vous à poursuivre, à confondre,
A désoler quelqu'un qui ne peut vous répondre ?
Ce triomphe honteux de la méchanceté
Réunit la bassesse et l'inhumanité.
Quand sur l'esprit d'un autre on a quelque avantage,
N'est-il pas plus flatteur d'en mériter l'hommage,
De voiler, d'enhardir la faiblesse d'autrui,
Et d'en être à la fois et l'amour et l'appui ?

V. Qu'elle soit un peu plus, un peu moins vertueuse,

Vous m'avouerez du moins que sa vie est heureuse.
On épuise bientôt une société ;
On sait tout votre esprit ; vous n'êtes plus fêté
Quand vous n'êtes plus neuf ; il faut une autre scène
Et d'autres spectateurs : il passe, il se promène
Dans les cercles divers, sans gêne, sans lien ;
Il a la fleur de tout, n'est esclave de rien.

A. Vous le croyez heureux ? Quelle âme méprisable !

Si c'est là son bonheur, c'est être misérable,
Etranger au milieu de la société,
Et partout fugitif, et partout rejeté.
Vous connaîtrez bientôt par votre expérience
Que le bonheur du cœur est dans la confiance.

Un commerce de suite avec les mêmes gens ;
L'union des plaisirs, des goûts, des sentimens ;
Une société peu nombreuse, et qui s'aime,
Où vous pensez tout haut, où vous êtes vous-même,
Sans lendemain, sans crainte, et sans malignité,
Dans le sein de la paix et de la sûreté :
Voilà la seul bonheur honorable et paisible
D'un esprit raisonnable, et d'un cœur né sensible.
Sans amis, sans repos, suspect et dangereux,
L'homme frivole et vague est déjà malheureux.
Mais jugez avec moi combien l'est davantage
Un méchant affiché dont on craint le passage ;
Qui, traînant avec lui les rapports, les horreurs,
L'esprit de fausseté, l'art affreux des noirceurs,
Abhorré, méprisé, couvert d'ignominie,
Chez les honnêtes gens demeure sans patrie :
Voilà le vrai proscrit, et vous le connoissez.

V. Je ne le verrois plus si ce que vous pensez
Alloit m'être prouvé : mais on outre les choses ;
C'est donner à des riens les plus horribles causes.
Quant à la probité nul ne peut l'accuser :
Ce qu'il dit, ce qu'il fait n'est que pour s'amuser.

A. S'amuser, dites-vous ? Quelle erreur est la
vôtre !

Quoi ! vendre tour-à-tour, immoler l'une à l'autre
Chaque société, diviser les esprits,
Aigrir des gens brouillés, ou brouiller des amis,
Calomnier, flétrir des femmes estimables,

Faire du mal d'autrui ses plaisirs détestables ;

Ce germe d'infamie et de perversité

Est-il dans la même ame avec la probité ?

Et parmi vos amis vous souffrez qu'on le nomme !

V. Je ne le connois plus s'il n'est point hon-
nête homme.

Mais il me reste un doute : avec trop de bonté

Je crains de me froquer de singularité.

Sans condamner l'avis de Cléon, ni le vôtre,

J'ai l'esprit de mon siecle, et je suis comme un autre :

Tout le monde est méchant ; et je serois partout

Ou dupe, ou ridicule, avec un autre goût.

A. Tout le monde est méchant ? Oui, ces cœurs
haïssables,

Ce peuple d'hommes faux, de femmes, d'agréables,

Sans principes, sans mœurs, esprits bas et jaloux,

Qui se rendent justice en se méprisant tous.

En vain ce peuple affreux, sans frein et sans scrupule,

De la bonté du cœur veut faire un ridicule ;

Pour chasser ce nuage et voir avec clarté

Que l'homme n'est point fait pour la méchanceté,

Consultez, écoutez pour juges, pour oracles,

Les hommes rassemblés ; voyez à nos spectacles,

Quand on peint quelque trait de candeur, de bonté,

Où brille en tout son jour la tendre humanité,

Tous les cœurs sont remplis d'une volupté pure,

Et c'est là qu'on entend le cri de la nature.

Le Méchant, Acte 4. sc. 4.

ARISTE. CLÉON.

A. Tout seroit expliqué si l'on cessoit de nuire,
Si la méchanceté ne cherchoit à détruire.

C. Oh, bon ! quelle folie ! êtes-vous de ces gens
Soupçonneux, ombrageux ? croyez-vous aux mé-
chans ?

Et réalisez-vous cet être imaginaire,
Ce petit préjugé, qui ne va qu'au vulgaire ?
Pour moi, je n'y crois pas : soit dit sans intérêt,
Tout le monde est méchant, et personne ne l'est ;
On reçoit, et l'on rend ; on est à-peu-près quitte.
Parlez-vous des propos ? comme il n'est ni mérite,
Ni goût, ni jugement qui ne soit contredit,
Que rien n'est vrai sur rien ; qu'importe ce qu'on
dit ?

Tel sera mon héros, et tel sera le vôtre ;
L'aigle d'une maison n'est qu'un sot dans une autre ;
Je dis ici qu' Eraste est un mauvais plaisant ;
Eh bien ! on dit ailleurs qu' Eraste est amusant.
Si vous parlez des faits et des tracasseries,
Je n'y vois, dans le fonds, que des plaisanteries ;
Et si vous attachez du crime à tout cela,
Beaucoup d'honnêtes gens sont de ces frippons-là.
L'agrément couvre tout, il rend tout légitime.
Aujourd'hui dans le monde on ne connoît qu'un
crime,
C'est l'ennui : pour le fuir tous les moyens sont bons ;
Il gagneroit bientôt les meilleures maisons,

Si l'on s'aimoit si fort ; l'amusement circule
Par les preventions, les torts, le ridicule.
Au reste, chacun parle et fait comme il l'entend :
Tout est mal, tout est bien ; tout le monde est content.

A. On n'a rien à répondre à de telles maximes :
Tout est indifférent pour les ames sublimes.
Le plaisir, dites-vous, y gagne ; en vérité,
Je n'ai vu que l'ennui chez la méchancéte.
Ce jargon éternel de la froide ironie,
L'air de dénigrement, l'aigreur, la jalousie,
Ce ton mystérieux, ces petits mots sans fin,
Toujours avec un air qui voudroit être fin ;
Ces indiscretions, ces rapports infideles,
Ces basses faussetés, ces trahisons cruelles ;
Tout cela n'est-il pas, à le bien définir,
L'image de la haine, et la mort du plaisir ?
Aussi ne voit on plus où sont ces caracteres,
L'aisance, la franchise, et les plaisirs sincerés.
On est en garde, on doute enfin si l'on rira.
L'esprit qu'on veut avoir gâte celui qu'on a.
De la joie et du cœur on perd l'heureux langage
Pour l'absurde talent d'un triste persifflage.

Acte 4. sc. 7.

POLITICAL ECONOMY.

London, 1819.

POLITICAL ECONOMY is an awful thing. It is appalling to think that the Legislature is often called upon to decide questions which involve the immediate happiness, perhaps the very existence, of millions of the people by the rules of a science which changes from day to day. It is not a matter of very urgent or pressing necessity to know, whether oxygen gets the better of phlogiston, or chlorine is a better founded name than oxy-muriatic acid. But it is of another kind of importance to know whether a silver currency, of a certain standard, will prove a considerable benefit or certain ruin; whether an overflowing abundance of cheap foreign corn is a blessing or a curse to the nation which imports it. Yet these are questions to be decided

by reference to the authority of men, who, with all their talents, do not, I must confess, inspire me with perfect confidence. In the first place, it is difficult to trust implicitly in men who allow themselves to contradict the most sacred principles of their own laws. Adam Smith, for instance, thinks it would be right that every gentleman should be forced, by taxation, to keep a certain quantity of land in his own hands. M. Say, another great authority in these matters, maintains, that it would be right for a government to point out the districts in which manufactures ought to be established. If it is not easy to pay implicit deference to the authority of great political economists, it is also difficult to obtain a precise idea of what is the object or the subject of their science. M. Say, above quoted, tells us, in the beginning of his book, that political economy, which, according to him, ought to be called by some harder name, comprehends all means of acquiring wealth, and that a stock of learning or professional knowledge is as much capital as any other species of wealth. Yet, soon afterwards, he falls into common language, and speaks of Bologna as a place of great learning, but no wealth.

Next, there is nothing so various as the opinions of political economists. Adam Smith says, that the price of provisions regulates wages; Lord Lauderdale maintains, and supports his opinion by witnesses, that it has almost no influence upon wages. Political economists, in general, think there cannot be too much capital, or too great an increase of machinery. M. Sismondi thinks capital may be too abundant, and that machinery may starve the people. These opinions may be knowledge in the making, as Bacon finely calls the opinions of enlightened men, but, until it is made, one would hesitate to stake the happiness of a nation upon them. A very useless controversy was carried on for a long period on the division of the population into productive and unproductive labourers. It seems, at last, to be agreed to drop the distinction altogether, although, perhaps, it was good for arrangement.

Another distinction, almost as vain, has sprung up, respecting the modes of spending wealth. The money which is spent on improving land or building cotton-mills, is supposed to be laid out productively; whilst that which is spent on consumable articles, such as claret

or silk, is supposed to be wasted. But it is quite evident, that when men have attained a certain degree of wealth they will spend a great part of it, at least, on objects of enjoyment. Whether they will benefit their country thereby, depends solely on the industry of the working part of the community. If they are indolent, and have no opportunities for manufactures, as in Spain, the consumption of English muslins by the grandees will only cause the cultivation of a few more grapes and olives. If, as in England, the people are industrious, the consumption of silk and claret, raisins and brandy, will cause a fresh impulse to be given to the manufacturers of cotton, yarn, and muslin, cloth and hardware, and to the commerce and trade of the country. In fact, in an industrious country, nothing better can be desired than a great taste for luxurious enjoyments amongst the people; but in a sluggish country, on the other hand, the use of foreign luxuries is only confined to a few, and probably displaces some articles of domestic manufacture. And here I have mentioned one of the great limits to the science of political economy, which has been

nearly overlooked by its preachers,—the customs, habits, and manner of nations. In France, for instance, M. Say tells us, any tax on hats diminishes the consumption of the article. His observation shows, that France, is not a country of great wealth ; but proves nothing as he intends it should, with respect to taxes. An intelligent manufacturer, who travelled to ascertain the state of manufactures in France, found that the main difference between that country and England was, that the English workmen worked many more hours than the French. Valencia and Catalonia, where the most absurd restrictions are imposed on agriculture and trade, are the most flourishing and most populous parts of Spain. Here is a proof that habits of industry and taste for enjoyment are of more importance than any laws of regulation.

But the great limit to the science of political economy, is the difficulty of collecting data sufficient upon which to found any certain rules. If all nations were at peace, if they had all the same currency and the same weights and measures, and if all national prejudices were abolished, it would then be easy to legislate according

to theoretical principles. But the frequent occurrence of war, the complication of political interests, the existence of ancient treaties, and, above all, the establishments of capital and of people which have taken place, on the faith of the continuance of old arrangements, often render a question of political economy much more difficult to solve than almost any problem in the range of mathematics. For instance, it is very easy to say, that the trade in corn ought to be free, like any other trade, and that if your farmers cannot grow corn so cheap as the foreign farmers, they ought to let it alone. But when you are requested to consider that every other trade is restricted by duties, amounting in some cases to a prohibition; when you are told that many millions of capital have been laid out, and many hundred thousands of people bred up and employed, on the presumption that the growth of corn would continue to be protected by law; when it is stated to you that the taxes are so heavy in this country and so light in other countries, that the effect of a free importation of corn would be the ruin of all the farmers, the conversion of the people entirely into manufac-

turers, and the consequent dependence of the whole nation on the commercial laws, and even the caprices of foreign nations, you must own you have a knotty question to decide; and, besides all this, the question may be of such urgency, that I have seen several thousands of farmers utterly ruined, the manufacturers suffering for want of the internal trade, two hundred banks broken, and money change its value, solely because a year was given to consider of the arguments of the political economists.

Again, with respect to paper-money. Nothing is so easy as to understand and to retail the sound theory of a metallic and paper circulation; nothing more safe than to confute the narrow and absurd maxims of the Bank Directors; and, you would suppose, nothing more obvious than the wisdom of restoring a paper which has been depreciated, to its just value. But when you reflect that this question is intimately connected with another, namely, the finances and the taxes of the country; when you consider that the restoration of the currency adds so much per cent. to the taxes, already difficult to pay, and an equal per cent-

age to the debt which almost overwhelms the country even now: when you reflect, besides, that the measure is not one of honesty, because the alteration was made twenty years ago, and debts both public and private have been contracted in currency depreciated from five to thirty per cent.; it is then worth examining, whether it will not be better to make your paper payable in gold at its present value. By adopting the more theoretical measure, it is true you give a striking example of your love of principle, and of the danger of ever leaving it, but at the same time you risk the lives of a great portion of your people, you cramp trade, you arrest commerce, and place yourself in new difficulties, when you ought to be making a vigorous effort to cope at once with your own debt, and the rival manufactures of other nations. In plain terms, these questions involve matters of more importance than those which merely regard the wealth of nations; I mean considerations which affect their morals and their lives. It is very true that England would sell more cotton, if her manufacturers got cheap corn from Poland. But a statesman is bound to think, whether it

would be better to have a million more people in the manufacturing towns, at the certainty of losing half a million of farmers and labourers : and he must place before his eyes the picture of that half million starved out of existence, dragging along with them, for a time, the people employed in every branch of industry which depends upon their demand, clamorous for a pittance, which the inflexible spirit of science denies, shaking, perhaps, the pillars of the state, and menacing the whole order of society, before they suffer themselves to be extirpated by famine. And here I may remark, that there is no more lamentable consequence of the misapprehension and misapplication of theories of political economy, than the opinions which prevail concerning the relief of particular distress. It is true, certainly, that keeping a number of the people on charity diminishes the funds of labour, and maintains a population which the society cannot fairly support. But this is no argument against relieving a portion of the people who, owing to some accidental circumstance, are thrown into misery. If you do not relieve them they must perish, and the popu-

lation is thus made adequate to the demand. This is the mode of acting recommended; and I must say, it is to the full as cruel as the most extensive plan of war and conquest. But then, it is said, if you do relieve them, you are diverting the funds of labour from the useful productive class to another class who make no return. But this is not at all necessary. Suppose, for instance, a landholder lays down two of his carriage horses, and gives the money to the poor, who are at the moment distressed; he lessens the consumption of oats, and increases that of wheat; nor is it just to say, that the price of wheat is thereby increased to the active labourer. The persons relieved are, by supposition, already existing, and have been considered in the general production of corn for the year; and it would be a cruel method, indeed, to allow them to starve, that corn might fall to a lower price than usual. Again, a manufacturer or merchant may lay out in some particular year of great distress the surplus of his profits in charity; if that surplus was to have been left to accumulate in the funds, or employed in stock-jobbing speculations, surely it may be

diverted without much harm. But to come to the most difficult case of all, let us suppose his surplus profits were to be employed in fresh enterprises of industry; in cleansing land, in extending a manufactory, in building a ship; even in this case he may do no harm by supplying the starving poor; for, if they are allowed to perish, and the industry of the country increases, a new population will be required, and, in the meantime, he will be obliged to pay higher wages to those who are employed in his trade or manufacture. I have said, if the industry of the country increases, for it must be allowed that all these reasonings apply only to a flourishing people. If the country is falling into decay, no power on earth can maintain the population; the hand of charity will gradually close, and new objects will, at the same time, present themselves for relief. But it is not the distress of one year, or a stagnation, owing to some temporary cause, which should induce us to allow a part of our people, and that, perhaps, including some of our most industrious artisans to die before our eyes — it is not humane, it is not wise.

Another error, besides those which relate to the objects and the certainty of this science, is the extreme exaggeration of its importance when taken alone. It has been asserted, that political economy affords rules for making nations happy, without disturbing their internal government, or awakening, like other political disputes, the alarms of ministers and kings.* But this notion tends only to produce delusion. The very ignorance in which despotic kings and their counsellors habitually live, prevents their attaining a true knowledge of the points in dispute between M. Say and M. Sismondi. It is only where there is a free press and an open discussion, that any science relating to government can attract attention and acquire importance. True it is, certainly, that Charles IV. of Spain established a Professorship of Political Economy at Salamanca; but he soon rendered the appointment useless by placing the government in the hands of the Prince of the Peace, who, for a long time after

* See Stewart's *Life of Adam Smith*.

he was First Minister, thought Prussia and Russia were the same country.

But even if a Minister should arise in a despotic country, disposed to carry into practice sound plans of political economy, what obstacles would he not meet in the execution of his work? How would he deal with royal monopolies? By what means could he tax the nobility and clergy? In what manner would he relieve the people from *corvées* and other forced labour? Manifestly and clearly only by making a popular revolution.

Let us not then be deceived by specious proposals for a benevolent despotism. Government will always be conducted for the benefit of those who govern. If the few alone govern, the interests of the few only will be provided for; if the people themselves have a share in the government, the interests of the many will be consulted.

STATE OF THE ENGLISH CONSTITUTION.

“ To sustain, to repair, to beautify this noble pile is a charge intrusted principally to the nobility, and such gentlemen of the kingdom, as are delegated by their country to parliament. The protection of THE LIBERTY OF BRITAIN is a duty which they owe to themselves, who enjoy it; to their ancestors who transmitted it down; and to their posterity, who will claim at their hands this, the best birth-right, and noblest inheritance of mankind.”

BLACKSTONE.

THERE is nothing in human councils, or human institutions which stands still. The letter of law is changed to suit the occasion of the day, and the spirit of a government varies with the disposition of the rulers who govern, and the state of the people who are governed. It behoves us, then, as members of a free community, priding ourselves upon our liberty, and

enjoying, (still enjoying) the benefits of a more unrestrained, more immediate, and more general discussion of all our interests, than any nation ever before possessed, to examine from time to time the condition of our state vessel, to overhaul her rigging, and to see that she has not sprung a-leak upon the stormy voyages she has undergone. But if any moment is more peculiarly fit for such an enquiry, it is when a long and eventful reign has come to its melancholy termination ; and when a prince ascends the throne, under the auspices of new laws, which we are assured are better calculated to protect legal and orderly freedom, than the old and venerable barriers called Magna Charta, and the Bill of Rights, which they are intended to modify and supplant. Yet, let me even here protest against being supposed to say, that those laws of themselves form any effectual controul upon our liberties ; — the strength of Sampson is not to be subdued by seven green withs ; the new bills are only to be considered as steps in legislation, and as affording a measure of the temper, in which the government of this country is in future to be

conducted. The spirit which has been manifested by the ministers and their supporters in the session of November, 1819, forms one of the most important data upon which we can found an estimate of the vigour still remaining in the English constitution, and must be allowed to have an important place in a memorial of what is past, and a prognostic of what is to come.

In reckoning up what the crown has gained upon liberty during this reign, we must take into account its two wars, American and French, and the increase of public debt and establishments. In estimating, on the other hand, what new securities liberty has gained, we must put into the balance Mr. Fox's law of libel, the resolution against general warrants, and the vast increased weight of public opinion; and this again leads us to the alarms and restrictive measures.

Whatever may have been the reasons, good or bad, which induced the government of this country to undertake a war against the insurgent colonies of America, and whatever may have been the policy, or even the necessity of entering into a contest with the French re-

public, it cannot be denied that the object of both these wars was to oppose popular revolution, and that their spirit was contrary to popular principles. It may be said, indeed, that both of these wars were supported by the full concurrence of the people of this country. But this objection takes away nothing from the weight of the observation which I wish to make. It must be recollected, that a high-spirited nation is easily incited to take arms; and, whether they do so, in a cause congenial to freedom, depends entirely upon the occasion which presents itself, and the use which is made of it by those whose talents qualify them to direct public opinion. Now the occasions upon which both of the wars before alluded to, arose, were the resistance of a people to its government; and the arguments adopted to induce this country to declare war, were chiefly an appeal to its insulted dignity, and to its feelings of loyalty and piety. During a long period of this reign, comprising more than half of its extended duration, no attempts have been wanting to inflame the public mind, daily and hourly, against the rebellious subjects of our own king, and against a neighbouring

nation, which deposed and executed its sovereign. It is impossible but that these invectives must have had their effect, and it can create surprise in no one that a country so excited, so taught, and so inflamed, and that too by one of the most eloquent writers, and one of the most eloquent speakers whom England has produced, should become at last extremely alive to every supposed misdemeanour against prerogative, and completely dull and insensible to any violation of constitutional rights. Nor will those escape blame in the page of history, if any such there were, who led the people on by exaggerated representations of facts; who inflamed their imagination by highly-coloured pictures of carnage and of murder, and endeavoured to put a stop to internal and civil bloodshed in one nation, by extending slaughter and desolation to every state in Europe, and every region of the globe. The example of the French Revolution, however, has had an influence still more direct on the progress of our affairs: the French Revolution is ascribed to every thing, and every thing is ascribed to the French Revolution. If

a book is written containing new opinions on subjects of philosophy and literature, we are told to avoid them, for to Voltaire and to Rousseau is to be ascribed the French Revolution. If an ignorant cobbler harangues a ragged mob in Smithfield, we are told that the state is in danger, for the fury of a mob was the beginning of the French Revolution. If there is discontent in the manufacturing towns, we are told that the discontent of the manufacturing towns in France was the great cause of the French Revolution. Nay; even if it is proposed to allow a proprietor of land to shoot partridges and hares on his own ground, we are told that this would be to admit the doctrine of natural rights, the source of all the evils of the French Revolution.*

It is in vain that these absurd clamours are repeatedly refuted; it is in vain that it is shown that the French Revolution arose from one simple cause, the discordance of a brave and enlightened people, with a corrupt,

* See Parliamentary Debates, 1819.

bigoted, and despotic government; it is in vain that the atrocities of the revolution are shown to have been owing partly to the cruel character of the people, and partly to the alarm excited by foreign interference.

It is to no purpose that it is observed, that no comparison can be drawn between a country which had no constitution and no freedom; and one which has a constitution, and where the whole people are free.

The voice of reason is not listened to; the whole precedent is taken in the gross as a receipt in full for every bad law; for every ancient abuse; for maintaining error, and applauding incapacity. It is as if a patient were worn out with bad fare, and exhausted with debility, and a physician should administer copious bleedings, because his next-door neighbour was dying of a pleurisy.

Whilst the power of the crown has been thus increased by the doctrines, it has been no less augmented by the burdens of the war. After the peace of 1763, the interest of the debt was about 4,600,000*l.*: it is now 31,440,000*l.* exclusive of the sinking fund.

The whole sum raised by taxes and loans did not then exceed 14,000,000*l.* : the whole sum now raised yearly in taxes alone, is between 54 and 55,000,000*l.* But this sum is great, not only in comparison of all which has preceded, but also with reference to the entire wealth of the country. The income-tax of ten per cent. produced no more than 14,000,000*l.* Now it is easy to conceive how great a weight must be added to government by the immense sum thus collected from the people. This great revenue is divided into three portions, each adding in its vocation to the influence of the crown. The first is the debt; the second establishment; and the third office. With respect to the influence of the debt, it is greater than could at first sight be supposed : a fundholder is entitled to his dividend, it may be said, and has no obligation to any one : but this rule does not hold in practice. The large fundholder imagines, that it will be of advantage to him to be a friend of government in any business that may take place with respect to the financial measures of the year, and even though the minister should discourage such an expectation, it is impossible

to avoid a certain degree of coquetry. Besides, is it not natural that the fundholders should look on those as their friends, who have been the causes of their prosperity, and the immediate instruments of their wealth? It was probably to make friends to the Hanover succession and to themselves, that the Whigs of 1695 promoted the funding system.

The Pitt system of government, therefore, which created three times as much funded property as it found, and enabled a banking corporation to issue money of paper to any extent, must have made itself friends in proportion. At the same time, I by no means intend to deny that many stout friends of freedom are to be found amongst those who have acquired fortunes by the loans. But they are the exception.

The feeling of attachment to the ministry is carried still farther by the smaller fundholders; numbers of them imagine that their property is contingent upon the permanence of a first Lord of the Treasury; and they have no other notion of opposition than an attempt to make a national bankruptcy. This idea certainly prevails only among the very ignorant, who

are, however, a body of great weight and number.

The second application of the taxes is to establishment. An establishment which in 1790 cost four millions and a half, now costs upwards of eighteen; our troops are augmented with the increase of our colonies; and our forts and governments are multiplied in every part of the globe.

The third direction of the public money is to maintain offices, and allowing that many reductions have been made, there still remains enough to create and support an independent, unpopular, incapable administration. It has been said, that the reduction of establishment and offices diminishes the influence of the crown. Supposing that at the moment it does so; yet an establishment once reduced, is on the contrary a source of increased influence; for persons who have served will be much more anxious to be appointed to a vacancy, than those who have not already devoted themselves to a profession. It is wonderful to observe, too, with how much eagerness parents seek to employ their sons in a situation of perpetual

dependence; 10,000*l.* a year may be made by physic; 14,000*l.* a year by surgery; 18,000*l.* a year by the property of a newspaper; 17,000*l.* a year by pulling out teeth; but rather than all these, a prudent, steady man, will make his first-born a clerk in a government office, where, if he surpasses his fellows both in merit and favour, he may, in time, receive 2000*l.* a year at the will of a minister.

A class of offices which is more important, perhaps, than all the rest, is that of persons employed in the collection of the revenue; upwards of four millions a year are spent in this necessary service. Every year a large book is presented to the house of Commons, containing an account of the augmentation of salaries and superannuations, chiefly in offices of this description. These offices are thus disposed of. The offices of the excise are generally given by the commissioners of excise appointed by government, a few being reserved for the patronage of the Treasury; i. e. in other words for members of the house of Commons. The offices of the customs are entirely at the disposal of the Treasury; the offices of the stamp

and post-offices are given by the Treasury, at the recommendation of members of parliament, *voting with government*. The receivers-general of the land-tax, whose poundage alone amounts to about 78,000*l.* a year, and whose balances give as much more, are appointed at the recommendation of county members *voting with government*. In the instance of one county, this office was lately divided into two, to increase the patronage. Where the members for the county both vote with opposition, the appointment is given to the person who the first lord of the Treasury thinks ought to be member for the county. Thus it is, that the influence of the crown has not only been augmented, but organized, and directed in a manner never before known.

Without entering on the question of reform, I may here observe, how much the disciplined corruption of the Treasury increases ministerial influence in parliament. The produce of the taxes descends in fertilising showers upon the proprietors, the agents, and the members of boroughs. For them there is a state lottery which is all prizes; the beautiful gradation of

ranks is observed there, in all its harmonious proportions. The elector of a borough, or a person he recommends, obtains a situation in the customs; the attorney who acts for the borough, disposes of a commission in the navy; the member of parliament obtains a place in the Mediterranean for a near relation; the proprietor of two boroughs obtains a peerage in perspective; and the larger proprietor, followed by his attendant members, shines in the summer of royal favour, with a garter, a regiment, an earldom, or a marquise.

To all this we must add the old inevitable influence of the crown, in the professions of the church and the law. How few men there are who can go through life in utter contempt of the rewards, which are the proper objects of their ambition! How few who, contenting themselves with deserving to be Bishops and Chancellors, by their talents and industry, do not also endeavour to become so by their servility!

Let us now examine the opposite scale. Some improvements in constitutional law have been made during the late reign. The chief of these

is undoubtedly the libel law of Mr. Fox, to which the whole security of the free press is owing: another is the declaration of the illegality of general warrants; and a great step was made by placing the civil list more entirely under the controul of parliament, first at the beginning of the reign, and then by Mr. Burke's bill. The act by which GEORGE III. at his accession, restrained his successor from removing the judges, is also a benefit; but so slight a one as to be hardly worth mentioning.

The publication of the debates in parliament, and the general diffusion of political knowledge, is on the other hand, a most important change. The censor of the Roman republic, however austere in the exercise of his functions, could never equal in minuteness of enquiry, or severity of rebuke, the unseen and irresponsible public of the British Empire. What statesman can hear with unshaken nerves, that voice, which, beginning in the whispers of the metropolis, rises into the loud tone of defiance, within the walls of parliament, and is then prolonged by means of the hundred mouths of the

press, till its innumerable echoes rebound from the shores of Cornwall, and the mountains of Inverness? What minister, however profligate in his notions, does not, in his parliamentary language, endeavour, in some degree, to conciliate the uncorrupted mind of the multitude? The effect of this power is, however, very vaguely estimated, when it is said that public opinion overbalances any advantage the crown may derive from the increase of the standing army, or the extension of its influence. In the first place, this argument proves too much, for if public opinion is a sufficient counterpoise to power, why should we maintain the Habeas Corpus Act, or Magna Charta, or continue the existence of Parliament itself? But in the second place, in the very statement of their argument, its propounders are guilty of a fallacy; they take for granted, that all the opinion which has been admitted to a share of influence in the state, is in a spirit of enquiry, and of controul upon the government: but if we examine the matter ever so little, we shall see that this is far from being the case. Let us analyze this great

compound called public opinion, and endeavour to ascertain of what simple elements it consists.

From the Revolution to the beginning of the present reign, the government of this country, though popular in all its laws, and most of its maxims, was, in its nature aristocratical. The people, in the enjoyment of liberty, gave a large and generous confidence to those who had toiled and suffered to obtain it. But at the beginning of the present reign, several new parties arose, of which it will be sufficient to mark the outlines.

One of these parties consisted of a new body of courtiers and sycophants, who called themselves the king's friends: this tribe, which has been powerfully described by Mr. Burke, has been of late, somewhat broken and dispersed; yet in a division last year in the House of Commons, it mustered above sixty. These men are of the true eastern race, equally indignant if a single equerry is taken away from the household of a king who never leaves his chamber, or if a single concession is granted to a million of people starving with hunger.

Another of these parties consisted of the old and steady friends of Divine Right; they found it was no longer of any use to say "that they were for passive submission, and were determined to resist the present dynasty." They found, like Cedric in a late novel, that it was hopeless to contest the crown with a government so firmly established; but in changing the objects of their attachment, they by no means altered the nature, or the spirit of it. They knelt to their new deities with all the fervour of the superstition which had bound them to their former idols: they were still always ready to forget the interest of their country, to follow the advantage, or the caprice of a single family; and it appeared by their conduct, that they had only abjured the errors of the House of Stuart, to embrace those of the House of Brunswick. No wonder that their allegiance was received with the most emphatic expressions of gratitude. *

* See the preface to Hogg's Jacobite songs, lately published.

The third party consists of that large number of persons newly admitted by a little smattering of newspaper reading, to a sight of the political drama, who are carried away by the vulgar feelings of admiration, for the trappings of royalty; these persons are properly to be reckoned amongst the mob. *

A fourth party, are those who are attached to the laws, but are perpetual alarmists. They would use the Constitution as some ladies do a new gown, never put it on for fear it should rain. They are continually reminding us of the necessity of burying party animosities for the sake of the country; by which they mean, suspending the laws, to quiet their own nerves. It is upon these persons, especially, that the very name of French Revolution has the greatest effect; they shut their eyes to every thing that is encouraging, in order to fix their gaze upon the low trash by which a few miserable in-

* “ Whenever this word occurs in our writings, it intends persons without virtue, or sense, in all stations; and many of the highest rank are often meant by it.”

dividuals gain a precarious livelihood. It is upon these timid creatures also that the government press has the most pernicious effect; nothing, it is well known, is so likely to forward the sale of a newspaper, as an account of any news that is by the newsmen called “bloody;” and now that the war is over, there is no way of obtaining such news, but by exaggerating the numbers and the violence of public meetings. This manœuvre was practised to such an extent last year, that the whole nation took the alarm, and Englishmen were ready to cut each other’s throats in the surmise of a plot. Unhappily, in one instance, they went farther, and blood was shed in civil commotion. May that day never be repeated !

We come now to the party, whom, for want of any other name we may call the New Party. They require a little further examination than we have given to the others.

When education and wealth, and the publication of the debates, brought the politics of the day within the sphere of a larger portion of the community than had hitherto attended to

them, it was not to be expected that the new observers should immediately understand the movements of so complicated a machine as the English Constitution. Except from the newspapers, their only knowledge of its principles was from books. Hence, according to their several dispositions, they took up with axioms wholly foreign to the practice of the best times. The abettors of the Tories, for instance, maintained, that the prerogative entitled the king to name his own ministers, and that whoever should interfere, either with advice or remonstrance on such a subject, would be almost guilty of treason. The new allies of the Whigs, on the other hand, thought that they were speaking in the true spirit of the Constitution, when they said that the House of Commons ought to be entirely independent both of the Crown and the House of Peers. To the Tory party these maxims of their friends could not fail to be agreeable, as they were quite reconcileable to their conduct, and, indeed, were, in many instances, only a revival of their old doctrines, which had been exploded by the Revolution of

1688. But some of the opinions of the new popular party were by no means so favourable to the Whigs: one or two instances of this may be mentioned. The system of government before the accession of the present king, consisted in uniting the most considerable interests of the country with the greatest attention to the liberties of the people. If then, at any time, a popular leader rose up, whose measures were sanctioned by public opinion, the party in power showed themselves ready to coalesce with him — a new vigour was infused into the administration, and increased success crowned their union. Thus, a coalition in 1746 produced the naval triumphs of the following year; a coalition in 1756 led to the brilliant triumphs of the Seven Years' War. But when, in 1783-4, Mr. Fox formed a coalition to oppose the secret intrigues of the court, a cry of "shame!" resounded from one end of the country to the other; and when, again, he united himself to Lord Grenville, in order to obtain a broad and liberal administration, numbers of his partizans grew cool in his cause, and sooner or later

abandoned his party. The cause of this I conceive not to consist entirely in the peculiar nature of those coalitions, (although, perhaps the former cannot be wholly justified;) but is also partly to be attributed to the fact, that the popular part of the nation has grown much more critical in its observation of public men. A coalition is, in fact, nothing more than an oblivion of former differences, in order to give effect to present agreement. With respect to the past, it is surely laudable; with respect to the future, it is only an extension of the principle of party. But the parties in the nation love to think that the statesmen to whom they are opposed, are not only wrong in conduct, but vicious in principle. A Foxite of 1797 looked upon Lord Grenville as a man endeavouring to ruin his country, that he might not lose his place; a Pittite of that day looked upon Mr. Fox as risking revolutionary anarchy, because he was excluded from office. These are the exaggerations which prevail among persons below the rank, or distant from the place in which the leaders of political warfare are to

be found. No wonder that such persons should be averse to any thing like a compromise. It is as if in the last scene of Richard III. when the audience eagerly expected Richard and Richmond to fight their mortal combat, they were to step forward and shake hands.

Let us now ask what is the consequence of this general dislike of coalitions? The first is, certainly, that a political leader, conscious of true patriotism, will be cautious how he provokes a clamour against him, which may deprive him of the confidence of the people; for the reliance on its integrity is the only strength of a party in opposition to the Court. The ultimate consequence therefore is, that the Court having to fight its adversaries single-handed, may, by a small portion of that cunning, which is so common in palaces, defeat every popular party and every necessary measure, and place its own tools on the ministerial bench.

Another demand of the popular part of the nation is, that every political leader should, from the beginning of his life to the end, preserve the most rigid and undeviating consist-

ency. Now, if this meant only, that he should remain constant to the same great principles — that having been an advocate for the Catholic Emancipation, he should not turn against it — that having been against the French war, he should not of a sudden defend it — nothing, in my mind, could be more just than to require such consistency. The opposite would show a want of honesty or want of firmness, either of which would make a statesman unfit to be trusted. But the consistency required is of another and more difficult kind. Whatever means a public man has recommended as fit to be adopted in one state of the country, he is required to promote at another, and very different period; whatever expressions he has let drop in the heat of debate, imperfectly caught up by a reporter in the gallery, he is required to accept and adhere to as his creed: and if ever he should be in power, he is to pay no attention to the commands of prudence, he is to give no time to smooth the obstacles which his opponents in a long course of years have built up; but he is to rush headlong into a precipitate

course of action, under pain of being branded as an apostate, and loaded with the reproach of corruption, selfishness, and profligacy. It will be very easy to give an instance of this from recent history. When Mr. Fox came last into power, his mind was fixed upon two things — the Abolition of the Slave Trade — and Peace. In order to accomplish these first ends of his ambition he endeavoured to form an administration which the Court might not be inclined, or might not be able, immediately to overthrow. But how ill were his great views seconded by those who professed to have in view the same objects with himself! Every concession, however unimportant in principle, which he made to his new colleagues, was seized upon with avidity as a proof of degeneracy, and quoted against a whole life of struggle. Nor did his enemies confine themselves to truth. At the risk of being thought factious, he opposed a monument to Mr. Pitt; and not long after it was said that he supported it. But the great clamour, as we may all recollect, was on the subject of the income tax. It was found necessary to raise the income tax to ten per cent. Mr. Fox declaring, that he

thought it a very bad tax, but that his predecessors had left him no choice. Was this true or was it not? If it was not, why has no one ever attempted to show what other resources were left for the administration? If it was true, why is Mr. Fox cruelly reviled for that which was not his own doing? If, indeed, he had persisted in the war, without negotiating for peace, and had then proposed an income tax, he might have been accused of inconsistency; but if our financial means had been overworked by the war of the year before, there was then no alternative for Mr. Fox but to impose taxes of which he disapproved; or to say to the enemy, "Our resources are exhausted — we surrender at discretion." Yet there is no reproach, no invective, which has not been directed against Mr. Fox for his supposed inconsistency! His memory has been pursued with calumny so frequent, that even the best minds have been tainted with prejudice against him; and his name remains as a beacon for all prudent men to avoid his generous devotion, and a monument of the ingratitude of mankind to those who endeavour to spare their lives or

promote their welfare. Let him who aspires to the world's power and the world's favour, set fire to the faggots of persecution, or give a loose to the ambition of conquest; let him tie down the human race by superstition, or waste them by the sword; but if he wishes to be followed in his lifetime, and adored after his death by the greater portion of his country or of the globe, let him beware how he pleads the cause of freedom, of toleration, of humanity, or of peace!

It must be owned, certainly, that the severity of public criticism checks some of those unprincipled bargains and sudden turns which used formerly to prevail among political parties. Upon the whole, however, the political review tends greatly to the advantage of the court. Not only are its enemies divided and dispirited by the shackles that are thrown upon them, but ministers and courtiers are at the same time mainly free from this restraint. Those who coalesce with the men in power, those who are converts to the treasury, find in the rewards of office a solid compensation for any hooting they may undergo. Whilst their adversaries are obliged to suspend their attention to public affairs, in order

to reconcile some discrepancy which appears between their opinions on reform, at an interval of twenty years, they who limit their humble ambition to office, change their whole dress, and appear with the great self-applause in an entire new suit of principles, opinions, sentiments, and votes. The criticism of the public, in the meantime, does not stop at individuals; party itself is the object of attack, and a regular committee is formed in the capital, more completely organized than any party ever was, for the purpose of preaching against political union. Nothing, of course, can be more agreeable to the court party, with whom, indeed, this language originated. If they could once divide their opponents, and bring a third of them to oppose rashly and inopportunately, and another third to oppose weakly and seldom, the court battle would be half gained. The only solid hope of having any government carried on would then rest on the ministry, and however ingenious the objections that might be made to their measures, no man could safely say that he preferred the public views of opposition to those of the ministry. The tools

of administration, are, therefore, most ready to join in decrying party. They are still more pleased when the self-styled reformers go a step farther, and reprobate that very party which is opposed to the Court. “Down with the whigs!” cries a trading politician at St. Stephen’s; “Down with the whigs!” echoes a political tradesman from Charing Cross. Thus it is that the ministers of the king, and the preceptors of the multitude, unite in philippics against that party to which the house of Brunswick owes its crown, and the people its Bill of Rights. The rise of this new body in the state, is, perhaps, the most fortunate thing for the progress of the crown which has occurred since the Revolution. For whilst its members are active in propagating all the old court echoes of the mischief of party, the corruption of all public men, that whigs are tories out of power, and tories whigs in power; another ministry would act just like the present, and a hundred more such doctrines, they contain within themselves a principle of destruction, which will prevent their ever becoming really formidable to the government. The creed which inculcates a

distrust of all public men, applies as well to their own leaders, as to those of other parties. The experience of the last few years has brought this to the test. Fortune had favoured them, by giving them a leader whose large possessions and gentlemanlike manners, gave a dignity and importance to the part which he took; whilst his zealous hatred of injustice, and sincere feeling for the people, atoned with many friends of freedom for the eccentricities and contradictions of his political opinions. Instead of the hollow patriotism of Wilkes, or the ingenious paradoxes of Horne Tooke, the new party could boast that their leader possessed the zeal of real conviction, and the eloquence of the heart. But although every pains were taken to bind him whom they had brought into their snares, yet some of the ablest of the party soon discovered that their leader was as corrupt as the reviled and persecuted whigs. And scarcely had this fresh party been descried by our political astronomers, before a new body broke off from it, and began to run its course in a still more irregular and eccentric orbit. If the new

party complained of the want of public spirit among the whigs, and if a newer pretended to expose the mock patriotism of the first seceders, there still arose fresh sectaries, who did not fail to declaim against the overbearing and aristocratical insolence of the calvinistic church. At the same time these renowned leaders, whilst they made themselves weaker and weaker by division, displayed every thing which was wanton and inflammatory in language, together with all that was feeble and futile in conduct. Provocations to revolution were not insinuated at secret clubs, and taught by degrees to desperate and misguided followers, but openly proclaimed to mixed crowds, composed of the idle and the curious, as well as of the mischievous and the seditious. Like other novelties, violence of language and avowals of rebellion had at first their attraction: but the people soon began to be tired of hearing the same speeches on the same subjects, and with those who could find work, two or even one shillings' worth of meat and clothes, were soon found to outweigh in value the froth and frippery of a cobbling orator. But the blow

was struck : the speeches that had been made, the resolutions that had been passed, and the numbers that had been present at the scene, formed intelligence sufficiently alarming to all who suffered themselves to be alarmed ; and although the real actors were as nothing when opposed to the King, the house of Lords, the house of Commons, the Army, the Navy, the Clergy, the Bar, the Yeomanry, and the great body of the commerce and trade of the country ; yet they were fully sufficient to excite a temporary panic, and to force the concurrence of great majorities in parliament to measures totally opposite to the genius of the constitution.

Thus, the house of Commons more than once has met, perfectly disposed to bear its part in passing any measures of severe coercion, which the ministers of the day thought fit to propose. It was thus that in 1795 and in 1799, laws were passed to prohibit public meetings without a sufficient authority, and to prevent printing, unless under certain regulations. In 1817 these measures were renewed, and in 1819 their severity has been much increased. Public meetings in the open air have been encumbered with so many

difficulties, and at the same time that they are subjected to the restraints, have been declared to be so totally without the protection of the law, that no prudent man will for the future venture to a meeting out of doors, unless he is assured that its object is sanctioned by authority, and that its language will be agreeable to magisterial ears. This measure, as well as others, has been supported by language as well calculated to support the authority of the Ottoman Porte, as that of the king of Great Britain. Another law respecting the press has this remarkable preamble.

“Whereas pamphlets and printed papers containing observations upon public events and occurrences, tending to excite hatred and contempt of the government and constitution of these realms as by law established, and also vilifying our Holy Religion, have lately been published, in great numbers, and at very small prices: and it is expedient that the same should be *restrained*:” —

Now what is the principle which constitutes the chief distinction of a free government? Is it that justice is duly observed between man

and man? No; for under the despotic government of Napoleon, justice, generally speaking, was duly administered. Is it that there should exist a senate or other assembly, formed for the purpose of controlling the monarch? No; for under the same Napoleon we have seen such assemblies become, as under the Emperors of Rome, the mere tool of the sovereign. The ruling principle of freedom is this, that no previous restraint is laid upon the actions, speeches, or writings, of the members of the state. The great argument of the advocates of despotism is, that by strong previous restraint all the tumults and disorders which might arise from the unlimited discussion of public events are prevented, and, at the same time, the necessity of punishment is avoided. How completely this argument fails in practice, is proved by the history of the Turkish monarchy, and the late experience of Spain since the return of Ferdinand. The argument of the friends of liberty, on the other hand, is, that no security for government can be so good as an easy and ready vent for all the opinions, and all the grievances of its subjects. By such means

those who are in authority may remove discontent before it grows to disaffection, and consider of a remedy before a grievance has become incurable. They acquire a knowledge of the designs and a measure of the strength of every party in the state. No secret plots disturb or arrest their career; the winds may blow, and the waves may rise, but no hidden rocks and no lee-shore threaten the existence of the navigator. But if this is an advantage for the government, it is a much greater one for the people. Every one who has a mind to think, and a heart to feel, must have the desire of knowing the dangers, and of expressing his opinions on the policy of his country: it is the natural feeling of man who has risen above the rudeness of barbarism, and has not suffered the debasement of corruption. — What is it which throws open to the student all the works of ancient and modern genius, and gives scope and vigour to his thought? Freedom of the Press. What is it which ensures to the humble artizan a security that the profits of his industry will be protected, and that no rank or office is shut to his just ambition? Personal Freedom. What

is it that gives the injured citizen a right to be heard by his country, and to make his complaint ring in the ears of his oppressor? Political Freedom. But it were endless to tell

How from that sapphire fount the crisped brooks,
Rolling on orient pearl and sands of gold,
With mazy error under pendant shades
Run nectar, visiting each plant, and feed
Flow'rs worthy of Paradise; WHICH NOT NICE ART
In beds and curious knots, but nature boon
Pours forth profuse on hill, and dale, and plain.

By the laws that I have mentioned, however, and particularly by the preamble which I have quoted, the principle of freedom is subverted, and the ruling maxim of despotism is admitted.

The enactments, however, are far milder than the declarations of the law; any meeting within doors may be held without observing a single provision of the new act, and a petition there agreed upon, may be signed by any number of persons out of doors. Printing and publishing are restrained most absurdly, it is true, to persons of a certain property; but still

it is not to be feared that any party, or any opinion will want its advocate. This being the state of things, it may be said, what have we lost? Aye; but what have our adversaries gained? Why this, that upon any new occasion of disaster and distress, the same violent language will be used on the part of the disaffected, and the ministers, on proposing new measures of coercion, will say of the bills of 1819, as one of them said the other day of the bills of 1799: "See! the same principle has been already introduced; the downfall of freedom was then predicted as it is now, and yet liberty is still in full vigour." This they may say, and they may repeat, until at length they propose a veto on all public meetings, and a censorship on the press. And the same speeches which were made for the measures of the late session, will serve equally well to prove the danger of all petitioning, and the illegality of unlicensed printing.

This result leads us to a consideration most unfavourable to liberty. It has been observed, with great truth, that the progress of the influence of the crown, is by slow and gradual

advances, and that the resistance opposed by the people, acts by sudden and occasional efforts. Thus, we see, that after the means of patronage have enabled the ministry to trench one by one upon the best privileges of freedom, a moment of distress produces enquiry, and, by an unexpected blow the nation wins a triumph which is equivalent to all that has been gained by the Court. But this advantage is at present entirely lost. Our enquiry on the influence of the Crown, leads us to the conclusion that it is increasing rapidly and continually, and that the murmurs which it excites from time to time, serve only to produce new restrictions upon liberty. Nor indeed can we ever expect that it will be otherwise. Whilst every opinion may be professed, some will always be found hostile to religion and to monarchy ; and, whenever the country is visited with distress, those upon whom misfortune falls, will for a time give a willing ear to any thing which professes to be a plan for their relief. There are two or three questions more, which I shall endeavour shortly to dispatch. The first is, what has hitherto been the influence of this pro-

gress upon the administration? the second, what is likely to be the final fate of the constitution? and the third, how this fate may best be retarded?

With respect to the first question, we may observe, that from the accession of the late king, the great object of the Court has been to appoint its own ministers: but the very success this scheme met with, has prevented that success from being complete.

The Court, which led the nation into the American war, and roused, unfortunately for itself, a spirit of rancour against America, showed itself incapable of conducting affairs with any tolerable management. The people took the alarm, and resumed the sovereignty; but the Court by cunning and delay resisted the blow

Mr. Pitt was half the choice of the Court, half of the people; he sacrificed alternately to his two patrons, and for the sake of power, was willing to yield to prejudice in the closet, and clamour in the country. He showed himself bold and resolute indeed, when both the Court and country were with him, and he gained a

victory over the house of Commons of his day, which showed to the king that a minister need not always be made in Parliament. Of his successors, the present ministers, it is difficult at this moment to speak with justice; but without any needless harshness, it may be observed, that their pretensions to power are founded rather upon a knowledge of business, and habits of office, than upon any character for vigour and firmness as statesmen. Upon the great questions which parliament is bound to consider, they take no manly or decisive course. Since the election of the last parliament, they have agreed only upon two measures, the propriety of imposing new burdens upon the property, and the necessity of laying fresh restrictions upon the liberty of the subject. The keenest of their opponents in vain tries to discover their line of policy; the most obsequious of their followers is astonished at the readiness with which they submit to modify their measures. Hence they have much diminished "the reverence for the king, that," according to Lord Clarendon, "is the best support of his royalty;" and hence, we may

apply to them the observation of Cardinal de Retz upon his opponent Mazarin. "One of the greatest evils," he says, "which the administration of Cardinal Mazarin has done to the monarchy, is the little attention he paid to keeping up its dignity. The contempt in which he held it succeeded, and this success is a still greater misfortune than the former; for it covers and palliates the evils which will infallibly happen, sooner or later, to the state, from the habit which has been adopted." Such in fact is the government we have got; a government, like a boy's hoop, driven first this way and then that, over the stones and through the mire, and sure to tumble down the first moment that it is not beaten along. Whenever such a ministry shall fall, it will be entombed, not with the curses, but with the sneers of the country; and at its entrance to the infernal regions, it will meet with the fate of Pier Soderini, a politician of its own stamp.

La notte che morì Pier Soderini

L'alma n'andò dell' inferno alla bocca :

E Pluto le gridò: anima sciocca!

Ch'inferno? va nel limbo dei bambini. *

With respect to the fate of the constitution, it is somewhat difficult to say what it will be. The progress which we have described above, certainly tends directly to the euthanasia of Mr. Hume; but there are two circumstances of no slight magnitude, which will obstruct the final dissolution of our liberties. Both of these have been described as forwarding the growth of arbitrary power; but they will both impede its complete triumph.

The first is the national debt. However well inclined the people may be to pay enormous sums in taxes, for a government in which they take a share, and to support wars of their own choice, they will never submit to pay so immense a tribute for a debt incurred by their ancestors, to a king who admits them to

* This is an epigram by Machiavel, of which the following is a translation.

The night that Piero Soderini died,

His soul went posting to the mouth of hell:

“What? hell for you!” indignant Pluto cried;

“Go — and with brainless babes in limbo dwell.”

no portion of his power. The only thing which reconciles the people to the payment of sixty millions a year, is, the public discussion of political affairs in the House of Commons, and in the newspapers.

The second circumstance which stands in the way of arbitrary power, is this very liberty of discussion. There certainly exists in this country, a very large mass of enlightened men, who, without taking a decided part in her political parties, entertain liberal ideas, and are favourable to the progress of knowledge, and all the improvements of civilised life. It is not easy to conceive a nation passing from so general a diffusion of the light of knowledge, to the utter darkness of a despotism; and this circumstance formerly induced me to think the British Constitution was immortal.

Nor do I yet despair of seeing the spirit of our rights overcome the fears of our alarmists. There are numbers, certainly, who, satisfied with the quiet possession of their property, and terrified with the example of the French Revolution, are ready to surrender the remainder of the Constitution —

For what more oft in nations grown corrupt,
And by their vices brought to servitude,
Than to love bondage more than liberty;
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty?

The late elections, however, have shown that the great body of the people are firmly attached to their ancient laws. The next question is, how the people, having that object in view, may best be served? Without presuming to dictate on this subject, let us turn to some words of Mr. Burke, written in the year 1777, during the contest with America. The time at which they appeared is thus described by the same author: — “ Liberty is in danger of being made unpopular to Englishmen. The faults which grow out of the luxuriance of freedom, appear much more shocking to us than the base vices which are generated from the rankness of servitude. Accordingly, the least resistance to power appears more inexcusable in our eyes than the greatest abuses of authority. All dread of a standing military force is looked upon as a superstitious panic. We are taught to believe that a desire of domineering over our countrymen is love to our

country; that those who hate civil war abet rebellion; and that the amiable and conciliatory virtues of lenity, moderation, and tenderness to the privileges of those who depend on this kingdom, are a sort of treason to the State." At this period, so momentous and so like the present, let us see what was the advice of Mr. Burke: —

“ I am aware that the age is not what we all wish. But I am sure, that the only means of checking its precipitate degeneracy, is heartily to concur with whatever is the best in our time; and to have some more correct standard of judging what that best is, than the transient and uncertain favour of a Court. If once we are able to find, and can prevail on ourselves to strengthen an union of such men, whatever accidentally becomes indisposed to ill-exercised power, even by the ordinary operation of human passions, must join with that society; and cannot long be joined, without in some degree assimilating to it. Virtue will catch, as well as vice, by contact, and the public stock of honest, manly principle will daily accumulate. We are not too nicely to scrutinize motives, as long as action is irreproachable. It is enough (and for

a worthy man, perhaps, too much) to deal out its infamy to convicted guilt and declared apostacy.

“ This, gentlemen, has been, from the beginning, the rule of my conduct; and I mean to continue it, as long as such a body as I have described, can, by any possibility, be kept together; for I should think it the most dreadful of all offences, not only towards the present generation, but to all the future, if I were to do any thing which could make the minutest breach in this great conservatory of free principles. Those who, perhaps, have the same intentions, but are separated by some little political animosities, will, I hope, discern at last, how little conducive it is, to any rational purpose, to lower its reputation. For my part, gentlemen, from much experience, from no little thinking, and from comparing a great variety of things, I am thoroughly persuaded, that the last hope of preserving the spirit of the English Constitution, or of re-uniting the dissipated members of the English race upon a common plan of tranquillity and liberty, does entirely depend on their firm and lasting union; and, above all, on their

keeping themselves from that despair, which is so very apt to fall on those whom a violence of character and a mixture of ambitious views, do not support through a long, painful, and unsuccessful struggle.”

Of all questions which can occur, there are none so interesting as those which concern the length and constitution of Parliament. Every question which relates to it, the duration of Parliament, non-resident freemen, diminishing expense, corrupt boroughs, &c. &c. ought to be brought into close and successive discussion. Many improvements might, no doubt, be made without the slightest danger. But, in my humble opinion, it would not be a wise measure to divide the country into districts, each of which is to return a member: such an alteration would, in fact, be a complete change in the form of government, and as such it is the very catastrophe which I am anxious to avoid. When we are obliged to look out for a new Constitution, a more perfect one may, perhaps, be devised. But, for one, I should wish to avoid such a necessity, because, with all the burthens of unnecessary wars, I still perceive

more freedom, in combination with justice and civilisation, in England, than I ever saw, heard, or read of in any other country. This is, in fact, the question to be decided; for those who are bent upon a Radical Reform contend, and must contend, that we are suffering evils so great and so far beyond common example, as fully to justify us in risking a change. This is a question I shall not stop to argue now; and, indeed, it must be decided by the experience, knowledge, and feeling, of each individual.

But I have another objection to dividing the country into representing districts. In my opinion, it is not wise to aim at perfection in political reforms. Man was not made for it. But in representation, above all other political questions, perfection is impossible to reach. If, then, we could have a majority of popular representatives in the House of Commons, ought we not to be satisfied? Ought we to chop off Gatton, or Old Sarum, merely because it is an imperfection, and destroys the symmetry of ideal beauty? If we could reduce the decayed boroughs to form only a small portion of the House of Commons, instead of being, as they

now are, the chief force of that assembly, should we not have taken a sufficient security for good government? Ought not something to be conceded for the sake of peace, with that large body of men, who are ready to fight to extremity against a theoretical plan of Reform?

On the other hand, those who are so violently prejudiced against the very name of Reform, should consider how many of the people are ready to serve under that banner; and they should beware how they increase those numbers, by protecting clear and convicted abuses — *Omnia dat qui justa negat.*

MARRIAGE.

IN former times there was no subject upon which parents exercised a more complete authority over their children, than that of marriage. The sons and daughters of a great family were affianced when young, and a voluntary preference of their betrothed, was as much out of the question in this case, as in the choice of a dry nurse or a tutor. Such is still the fashion in many parts of the continent of Europe; and in some capitals, Florence especially, and one or two more in Italy, young unmarried women are never allowed to come into society, even for a ball, which seems an amusement peculiarly adapted to their age. But it is generally agreed by the enlightened, that the English method is the

best, and that the married persons who have had the opportunity of seeing the world when single, and of making their own choice, assisted only by the advice and the discernment of their parents, are most likely to be happy. A farther view of the state of society in England may tend to throw some doubts upon the accuracy of this opinion.

When a young man comes into the English world, full of spirits, confidence, and latent love, the manner in which he is received, depends entirely upon his future prospects. If he has no fortune, nor likely to have any, he is scarcely permitted to be agreeable in general conversation, and any merit he may have, like good actions performed by heathens, tends rather to his detriment than otherwise. If, on the contrary, he is likely to enjoy a title and a fortune, his society is courted in exact proportion to his rank in the peerage, and the amount of his rent-roll. If he succeeds to these advantages by an unexpected death, the eyes of every mother in the land take a new view of him. He no sooner enters a ball-room, than their attention is at-

tracted towards him; the side-glances, not of fair virgins, but of hoary matrons, are directed to him; and he may plainly see, that he has the choice of the whole slave-market. The truly affectionate mother, especially, may be seen making the most marked advances. She waits with evident impatience, for the approach of the fat deer in the herd. Her manner to all others is short, abrupt, and uneasy; she thinks it enough to throw out a flattering word or two to poor men of fashion. Her whole soul is bent upon the riches and title of Curtius; and in order to obtain him there is no insolence, no meanness, no exertion, no fatigue, no duplicity, no falsehood, which is not welcome and familiar to her maternal soul. The rest of the world stand in a ring, whilst she is baiting her hook with flattery, and throwing out a net of pressing invitations. At last the poor young man, persuaded that the daughter is in love with him, and that it would be dishonourable in him to trifle with her affections, throws his person and his fortune at her feet. The one is accepted for the sake of the

other, and a marriage, without love, founded upon fraud and delusion, is considered by the whole world as the happiest of all possible events. Such is the difference between the old and the new-fashioned way of making marriages. The latter has substituted for authority and duty a complete system of inveiglement, which begins by making society a cattle fair, and produces in the end deceit amongst girls, and suspicion in young men.

The difference, in short, is nearly the same as that which may be observed between England and France, in the method of recruiting the army. France obliges her subjects to serve the state, or find a substitute. England, who abhors such cruelty, permits her officers to entice men into drunkenness, and persuade them to sell their lives in a moment of intoxication. If we were to put this into an allegory in the manner of the Spectator and Tatler, we might say that Cupid, it appears, can very seldom be persuaded to accompany Hymen. The god of marriage then, for want of his companion, looks to the society of Plutus and Minerva. But of late the goddess of wis-

dom has left him, and he has been seen in company with the god of Thieves, who has been ordered by Jupiter to attend him.

It remains now to be considered, whether the marriages thus formed, are happier than those of our ancestors. The Moravians, it is well known, are so persuaded that choice is not the foundation on which to build in marriage, that their marriages are all made by lot; and their teachers affirm, that their unions are as happy as any in the world. This, it must be allowed, although it may suit the condition of that simple and devout people, would not be a good institution for any nation whose manners are so corrupt and licentious as those of all the nations of Europe now are. A man, who is young and handsome, would be much mortified if he were to draw a vulgar ugly girl; and a celebrated beauty would enter into the state of matrimony, without any great reverence for the seventh commandment, if she were to draw lot thirty-four, which turned out to be a superannuated and ruined beau, instead of lot sixty, the youth upon whom her heart was fixed. But laying aside all thoughts of following the example of the

Moravians, it may be questioned, whether the liberty of choice produces as much happiness in marriage as might be supposed. Persons of moderate fortune in the one sex, and moderate beauty in the other, may, indeed, have time to study the characters of those they would wish to marry. But it is not so with a man or a woman who is supposed to be a prize in this great lottery. Sporus, who is what is called in the world a great fortune, no sooner beheld the fair Lisetta, than he was struck by her beauty. Her mother no sooner perceived that he was struck by her beauty, than she put every art in practice to catch him: he was scarcely acquainted when he found himself obliged to propose. After he was married, upon getting a little better acquainted with his wife, he found that she had a temper much more wearing than what is usually called bad; a crying, whining tone upon every thing that happens; a continual complaint, even of things done on purpose to please her; a perpetual narrative of grievances that have happened, or grievances that are to happen. In short, poor Sporus is so worn out with his wife, that he does nothing but repeat the ob-

servation of the old Scotch lady, "that she wondered where the ill wives came from, all the lassies are so good humoured."

What are we to expect, it may be asked, from a system which teaches girls in the bloom of their simplicity, to disguise all their feelings? to conceal the preference they have, and pretend to that which they have not? What can be expected, but that having practised deceit before marriage to procure a husband, they should employ it afterwards to conceal a lover? No sooner is a young girl brought into the world, than she is taught dissimulation, avarice, ambition, and dishonest love: her passions are all awakened, and it is no wonder if the husband should become the sufferer. According to the old fashion, a girl went from one duty to another, from obedience in the house of her father, to obedience in the house of her husband. As for love, quite as much as is required for married people naturally follows marriage; as naturally as a vine grows on the elm against which it is planted, does a woman, who is fresh and innocent, love the man to whose person and fortunes she has been

united. As for that violent, unjust, irritating, magnifying passion usually called love, which is the foundation of many of our present marriages, it cannot be said to be a good basis for happiness. After a year or two of possession it is worn out, and then, when the husband becomes indifferent to his wife, or, perhaps, discovers in her a thousand faults, which his shortsighted passion had taken for beauties; the wife, on the other hand, accustomed to tenderness, mortified at the decay of her power, and in want of a strong attachment, is open to the first assailant who offers the adoration she has ceased to receive.

We loved and we loved, as well as we could ;
Till the love was loved out of us both ;
When pleasure is fled, marriage is dead,
For pleasure first made it an oath.

Such is the history of Henry and Julia. But hitherto, we have only spoken of love matches between persons of equal rank. Let us now consider the case of a young heir who falls in love with an apothecary's daughter. It is very well to say that love levels all ranks. Rank

has its revenge. These marriages generally take one of two roads : either the husband becomes the tyrant of his wife, and makes amends for the honour he has renounced by turning a companion into a slave ; or else the wife detaches the husband from all his old connexions and natural associates, to place him in the society of her own relations and friends. And it is impossible it should be otherwise. Even love, strong as he is, cannot long hold by the single anchor of beauty. A thousand ties of similar friendships, of similar occupations, of similar habits, and even of similar amusements, are necessary to connect the man and woman who are chained to each other for life.

From all these considerations, we should be apt to conclude that the parental authority, although abused in former times, is still of great service in determining upon proper unions for young persons. Whilst a lover is blind to all the faults of his mistress, and converts her one merit of beauty into every other — sense, wit, temper, reading, just as it suits him ; whilst he mistakes the readiness common to all women for an uncommon share of penetration, and

construes the gracious air with which his mistress hears him talk, into solidity of judgment and sweetness of disposition; a father or a mother can make use of their reason, and perceive the want of sense or of temper, which is totally invisible to an unexperienced and partial observer.

However, it may be said that, after all, the fact ought to be attended to more than any reasoning on this subject, and that it is generally acknowledged, that the marriages of the French and Italians are less solemnly observed than those of the English. The reply to this is, that the marriages on the Continent are not unhappy, because they are formed by the parents, but for several other good reasons. The chief reason is, that men marry in those countries before they are disposed to settle, or, to use another English phrase, “before they have sown their wild oats.” The consequence is, that, about a year after the marriage, the husband betakes himself to the same company, and the same amusements or vices, which an English gentleman follows before he leaves school, and on his first entrance into the world. The English

gentleman having early satiated himself with the gross enjoyments of the senses, looks out for a companion, and endeavours with all his power to make his home comfortable. The foreign husband, on the other hand, treating his wife with neglect, or, perhaps worse, indulges his volatile inclinations, and is quite satisfied with having had the *droit du seigneur*. A fresh lover is soon at hand, the wife looks around her, sees the fashion to be in favour of lovers, and is soon contented to follow the crowd. It can scarcely be denied, that the virtue of women depends upon the conduct of men. The Hippias of Juvenal was the countrywoman of Lucretia and Cornelia; but, in the mean time, the Romans had conquered the world —

Sævior armis

Luxuria incubuit, victumque ulsciscitur orbem.

Dr. Johnson, it is true, maintained, that as the great mischief to be feared, is the confusion of progeny, adultery is a much less crime in a man than in a woman; and that a woman would not be justified who should leave her husband,

because she had detected him in an intrigue with her chambermaid. But this is a coarse manner of judging: from the moment a wife knows of her husband's intrigues, all the delicacy, all the sacredness of marriage is over. Her fear of censure or her sense of religion may prevent transgression; but her heart is gone away from her oath for ever.

ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD.

Brussels, 1816.

GOING, yesterday, with Frimont into a coffee-house in this city, he desired me to observe four men who were sitting at a table near us; they were talking very loud of the kings of Europe, and showed very small respect for those wise sovereigns. According to them, one was a tyrant, another a despot, a third an ungrateful blockhead, and a fourth a swindler. Astonished at such language, I asked an explanation. "The first," says Frimont, "whose eyes roll so wildly, and who is now spitting on the floor, was one of the main promoters of the resistance to Bonaparte at Madrid: he was wounded five times in the cause of Ferdinand, and

would now have been in his prisons in chains had he not made a timely escape; his crime consisted in making a speech against the Inquisition. The next is a Frenchman who distinguished himself in overturning Bonaparte in 1815; he was rewarded and caressed at first by the Bourbons, and remained quiet, till he was banished by the amnesty law, for his behaviour in 1792. The next was active in organising the societies in Prussia, which liberated the country, and secured the throne to the present king; but having been an object of suspicion ever since, he is come here to publish a work on the extinction of the military spirit in Europe. The fourth is a hair-dresser, who was a favourite of one of the deposed Napoleon Queens."

"Well," said I, "it is then no wonder they do not like their sovereigns; but, see, there are a party of gentlemen decorated with orders: amongst them, as Christian knights, truth, constancy, valour, and generosity may be expected to prevail. Let us hear what they say."—My friend smiled; but, heedless of him, I joined the company, and heard the most enthusiastic

praises of all that every government had done, was doing, or was going to do: they did not even omit to speak of the Dey of Algiers with the respect due to a crowned head; and one of them was very eloquent on the legitimate imperial race of China. My friend hinted to me to ask their names; accordingly I enquired of my neighbour, the name of the gentleman sitting opposite, who, no doubt, from his large star, must be a person of merit. “You are right,” said he, “in general, to suppose an order is the reward of merit, as it is in my own case; but that gentleman is a Genoese of great fortune, who having been a sad democrat, left his party in order to obtain that star from the King of Sardinia.” I soon left this side of the table, and went over to the Genoese, to enquire concerning my former neighbour. “Indeed,” said he, “he is a wretched fellow: he was formerly a man of science in France, and distinguished for that kind of thing; but now he pretends to live with *gens comme il faut*, and in order to do it, got that decoration for abusing Bonaparte, who was a favourer of science, and praising the Bourbons, who discourage it: I

wonder they give their orders to any but men of rank and fortune."

The next name I enquired, I was told "The gentleman is a member of the Belgian chamber of deputies. He ran away at the battle of Waterloo ; but obtained that cross for voting in favour of Holland, against his native country."

Tired of such characters, I took up my hat — "You now see," said my friend, as we were going away, "that orders are not always the reward of merit, and even are sometimes given to cover the want of it. We are apt to despise the South-sea islanders for exchanging their pigs and yams, for beads and red cloth ; but you see that, for stars and ribands, red, green, and blue, the Europeans will truck their fortune, their character, and even their liberty."

THE WANDERING JEW.

I HAVE now spent nearly eighteen hundred years upon the earth. It is a scene of suffering, and I have suffered—it is a scene of sin, and I have sinned—but it is also the dwelling of many virtues, and I have learnt to practise them.

My first steps, from the period which I dare not do more than hint at, were towards Rome; my first wishes were to erase from my memory the words which yet thrilled throughout my whole frame. For this purpose, I wished to plunge into a life of pleasure, and with health and pleasure I imagined that which was meant as a curse might prove a blessing. The words deceived. Often have I envied the miserable invalid, occupied in keeping unbroken the slender thread of existence, and finding, in the

means of preserving life, life itself. Often have I longed to be in the place of the fasting hermit, who is consoled for all his privations by visions of immortal bliss.

Yet, for some years, nay, for many years, in the usual human sense of those words — but I am not human ; even my vocabulary is separated from mankind — for many years, then, I enjoyed the sensual delights which women, and luxury, and good cheer can give. But there came a time when these enjoyments failed to give joy. The object was the same, the power the same, the indulgence the same ; but the zest was gone, the sensation was blunted and felt no more. I became, as an English author has described the Duke of Buckingham, as impatient of pleasure as other men are of misfortune. I tried every alley and corner of Armida's garden, but the enchantment was fled. For the truth is, that much of the pleasure enjoyed by debauched men does not arise from the mere gratification of the senses, but from the excitement produced by novelty and by strangeness. It is for this that we see men of pleasure fly perpetually from one woman to an-

other; it is for this that they live by night and sleep by day. A farce-writer has hit their character very well, when he makes a party of young men give a guinea a-piece to the waiter, "just by way of surprising the rascal!" For the sake of this excitement, too, young men of the town used formerly to attack the watchman and insult the police. But in this, as in every other respect, rakes of a lower order have a prodigious advantage. They issue from the gin-house to rob every jeweller in the city, or to commit a theft in the very presence of the officers of justice, or to conduct a burglary of unexampled difficulty. If success crowns their enterprise they are at once enriched, applauded, and caressed; they celebrate their triumph with their companions and their mistresses. They play for glory, and life is their stake. These reflections might have sufficed to disgust me with pleasure. How could I feel a delight which the lowest of caitiffs and of convicts taste in a much higher degree? And then, how could I hope to find novelty and excitement for ever in the same pursuit? Perpetual agitation has as much monotony as perpetual

repose. And then, again, how bitterly did I feel the difference of my lot from that of other men! The most dissolute of mortals cannot exhaust pleasure much faster than pleasure exhausts him. If he do not fall a victim to his disorders he changes his pursuits. His tired body, neither fit for great efforts, nor capable of strong excitement, leaves him the tranquil sensuality of middle age, and sometimes allows his mind to take the sovereignty and open to him a new career, happier than the former. For there is a happiness suited to each age, which the wise man knows how to seize. He is neither angry, that, at forty, he takes no pleasure in marbles; nor does he repine at seventy, that he can no longer take the same violent exercise in fox-hunting. He follows the series of nature, and as he becomes tired of one pleasure nature opens to him another. But I—I was still young, still vigorous, still ardent in all my movements and desires; the want still pained “my breast,” but became no “source of pleasure when redrest.” I was an outcast; the highest refinements were to me no luxury; the gayest carousals gave me no mirth; those who had

affected my heart perished in the throng; but even before they fell, I could not enjoy the solace of their society when the first flow of love was past. My strength still prompted me to action, and action made me sick of moving; I was restless, without being busy.

In this state I endeavoured to occupy myself with books. I found great pleasure in my first reading of the poets, and when I took up one of fame, whom I had never read, I gazed upon it with a delight which few other things have given me. "Here," I said to myself, "is a coffer full of happy hours," and my imagination exaggerated the beauties of the work I was about to read, far beyond those of all I had read before. With the same pleasure, too, I read Archimedes and Euclid, and the astronomers of the court of the Ptolemies. But these occupied only a small part of my prolonged life. When I had done with them, I began upon philosophy, and could I have found an interest in the works which treat of these subjects, I might long have been entertained with the variety of arguments, and the different theories on the same question. But I was disgusted with the per-

versity which would persist in resting the laws of mind and morals upon partial and exaggerated views. One philosopher maintains, that we ought to throw off the fetters which, he says, are imposed upon us by the wants of the body; that we ought to raise our minds to the contemplation of truth and falsehood, good and evil, by making ourselves totally independent of physical appetites. He tells us, that wealth and grandeur, so far from being objects of pursuit, are only sources of unhappiness, ignorance, and vice. When we have listened awhile to him, up starts another sage, also calling himself philosopher, who says, that we were made for pleasure, and counts learning and virtue only as the pleasures of a sensible and refined man. These two opinions have divided the world: Socrates and Plato, and the Christian Fathers, and the rigid divines, and Taylor and Pascal, and the Hindoo Saints, have adopted the one; the followers of Epicurus, and Montaigne, and Chesterfield, have maintained the other. Now what man of plain sense does not see that the truth lies between these opinions? that we may safely

indulge in the pleasures that are given to the indulgence of our appetites, provided we do it so moderately as not to interfere with the performance of justice and benevolence, and the study of truth? and, on the other hand, that all considerations of pleasure, or even of a generous impulse, must be thrown aside, when we are called to the discharge of a moral duty?

It is the same with nearly all the speculative opinions upon which the world have remained long divided. For instance, predestination and free will. If a man is predestined to be a villain, and to suffer eternal torments for being so, the Deity cannot be called, towards him at least, a benevolent Being. If, on the other hand, man has entire free will, that is to say, totally independent of motives and circumstances, the Deity can have no prescience. The probability is, then (and in these things a probability is all we can hope for), that man is chiefly determined by certain circumstances of birth, country, and education, which do not depend on his own choice; but that there is no single case in which the individual may not, by exerting the powers of his own mind, defeat all those circumstances.

The prescience of the Deity still remains; but is general, and not particular. We may suppose God knowing what Alexander or Newton has done, and what mankind will do.* I read at this time the *Phædo* of Plato; but how inconclusive are the reasonings! He wishes to prove the immortality of the soul, and the first of his two chief arguments is, that as the soul is nobler than the body, and as the body lasts some time after death, the soul must last much longer. But what has this to do with it? The body lasts, not as body, for it has none of the functions of a body, but as a part of inert, inanimate matter. Would it not have been more rational to say, it was probable that the body, which is of baser stuff, should be converted into other substances; and that the soul, which is totally unlike the body, should have a destiny totally different? Nor is the answer which Socrates gives to his objector just. The objector says, "The harmony of a lyre is much nobler than the wood and strings; yet it would not be just to say, when the lyre is broken that

* "It is impossible but that offences must come, but woe to him through whom they come."

because the wood and strings remain, the harmony must live much longer." Socrates answers this, by a long story of the lyre producing discord, as well as harmony; but he only clenches the objection; for the soul also has its discord as well as its harmony. If Crites had said the music of the lyre, instead of its harmony, his objection would have been unanswered. The true answer to his objection, however, is, that music and harmony are merely sounds made by wood and strings, when considered with respect to the lyre; and that their beauty and nobleness are derived entirely from our minds. The second great argument of Socrates is, that as the notion of equality must always go along with the number two, so the notion of life must always go along with the notion of the soul. And that which has always life is immortal, and what is immortal is indestructible. Now, it is very true, that life and the soul are always seen together; but so are life and the beating of the pulse: and it is one and the same thing to say his pulse beats, and he lives; therefore by this argument the beating of the pulse is immortal.

Yet I perceived in the words of Socrates, as reported by Plato, many sublime truths; and their being mixed with such erroneous reasoning, in the wisest of Grecian sages, went far to convince me of the necessity of Revelation.

I was now sick of my knowledge, or rather of my own ignorance and that of all the world; when one day my attention was called by a woman, still young, but with premature age in her features, who stopped me, to beg relief. I turned from her several times, when at last she said bitterly, "Sir, you are the cause." I looked at her and stopt involuntarily; she begged my pardon with tears; and when I told her to proceed, she told a tale which drove a knife into my heart. She had been a young and happy wife, when a procuress had employed all her arts to seduce her for my pleasures. She succeeded but too well; I paid the money and thought no more of it; but she, first won by the demon of avarice, and then given up to the demon of lust, went from frailty to vice, till she had ruined herself and all her family. Her husband was dead; her children starving. I relieved their necessities; the poor

woman again flourished, and lived to repair her faults. The attention which this incident roused, and the pleasure which the result afforded, discovered to me a new vein of pleasures which I flattered myself were purer, and less disturbed than any I had ever felt. From this time I entered upon a fresh career; I opened the prison to the debtor; sent physicians and medicines to the sick; and gave food and money to the indigent. This occupation for some time relieved the tedium and irksomeness of my long pilgrimage. But my bounty, bestowed without discrimination, and guided only by feeling, was often barren of good, and sometimes not unproductive of evil. My hand often yielded to importunity the relief which should have been given to merit concealed from sight, and indigence blushing to be known. My alms, directed by indolence, were often given to idleness; and rude profligacy obtained what was due to industrious virtue. The effects, instead of raising and swelling my heart, as at first, were often painful and embarrassing. One, whom I had relieved, as I thought, from the depth of poverty, and who came every day to utter

his gratitude and receive fresh benefits, turned out an impostor, and finished, by robbing my house. Some prisoners, to whom I had given too large a sum of money, bought arms, with which they murdered their keeper, and afterwards set the whole town of Rome in alarm. Every day revealed to me a thousand ungrateful returns, and misapplied benefits, bringing me at the same time as many new applications. I grew weary of it. The title of the Benevolent, given me by the people, which had at first pleased and flattered me, grew nauseous to my ear. I left the place, and went, or rather flew to a country of barbarians. There I tossed and tormented myself, till better thoughts came into my head. I perceived that feeling, without judgment, is an unsafe guide. I passed a severe censure on myself; I said, that to throw money to the right and left, without enquiry, was the mere indulgence of a selfish lust of praise. I held no humanity real, which did not walk between discretion and exertion. Benevolence, to be useful, should be wise and pains-taking; nor is it even then a virtue, which is all-sufficient. A man may be cha-

ritable to the poor, without repressing any of his passions, without controuling any of his vices, and even with a full indulgence of hatred to his rivals, and profligacy in his own conduct. He alone who has combated with bad dispositions, has the right to speak of the triumph of virtue. — Enough of this; I am not going to pronounce my own panegyric. The following extracts from my journal will tell my story faithfully.

ROME.

How magnificent is the city of Rome. Its splendour for a moment dazzled my senses, and benumbed my grief; but it has quickly returned with increased pain. The thousands of human beings whom I see every moment of the day, seem as strange to me as the flies and the birds. I am not a passenger in the same ship: I am worse than a stranger. I wish them all struck with the same judgment as myself; I wish the world a desert, every one of its cities a Carthage, and every Roman citizen a Marius — yet I bear the Romans no ill will; they have conquered, they have triumphed;

they flourish and enjoy. — I hate the triumphant and the prosperous — yet they are vicious and corrupt : in that I rejoice ; their manners may afford me pleasure and satisfaction.

Kal. Jan. — I have found an infinite satisfaction in observing the manners of the women. They are not here, as in Athens, confined to a separate part of the house, and suffered to see no men. They are allowed a free commerce with their acquaintances, and form a part of every polished society. By as much as this tended to improve and raise their minds, whilst the ancient simplicity remained, by so much it has tended to degrade them, now that the whole people has degenerated. For the women, forming the light and delicate surface of society, are more easily infected by any change in morals and behaviour ; their weakness affords no arms against the introduction of a vicious fashion : and as the corruption of the best things is the worst of all, so female modesty and purity, once undermined, there ensues the grossest abandonment of duty, and the most open violation of decency. An instance occurs just now to my mind : — Hippias the wife of

Fabricius Vejento, a senator, forgetting all the proprieties of her sex, in the lust of an ignoble attachment, has gone to Africa in the train of a gladiator. But I could mention a thousand such instances; even the commonest brothels are frequented by women of the highest rank in Rome. The gay lovers, or rather libertines of Rome, make no scruple, during dinner, and in the presence of company, of carrying on their intercourse with their mistresses, in the most indecent manner. Yet it is natural, and even pardonable, that women should indulge a passion which seems to be so essential a part of their existence, that if I were asked to define a woman, I should say, it is a creature that loves. They have other vices that are more disgusting, and which, therefore, I delight more in seeing them practise. For example, there is not a noble wife in Rome that goes to dinner till she has taken her wine emetic, and prepared herself an appetite by means that would take it away from the daughter of a ploughman.

I lately saw an instance of the manner, that even the youngest and most innocent are prepared to bear the sight, even of the greatest

crimes. I was present, by the favour of a freedman, at a feast of Nero. Britannicus, the son of Claudius, was sitting as is usual, at a smaller table opposite to the Emperor. An officer, appointed for the purpose, tasted all his victuals: he called for drink—it was too hot; a slave poured in a cooler liquor; that liquor must have contained poison, for he had scarcely put it to his lips again, when he fell back dead.* Those who were sitting by got up in horror; but Octavia, his own sister, though yet young, was able to compose her countenance; and when Nero declared it was only a fit, the gaiety of the feast was resumed.

It is a natural consequence of the total worthlessness of their women, that the poets who write love verses should be much at a loss what to say. Propertius, though a very pretty writer, falls into great inconsistencies in trying to paint the idol of his imagination with the features of his real mistress. In one elegy he denies her permission to kiss even her mother, that he may not be jealous; whilst in others

* Tac. Ann. lib. xiii. c. 16.

he owns that she cannot be constant three days, and that he has no sooner left Rome, than her bed is occupied by another.

* * * * *

I supped yesterday with Atticus. As he is an idle and luxurious man, he supped at an earlier hour than other people. Every thing was in a magnificent stile. Having previously bathed and anointed, we lay down about three o'clock on beds of tortoise-shell, to a table of which the support was ivory. Each guest was crowned with a garland of roses, and the ceiling was so contrived as to open from time to time, and let fall showers of perfume upon the room. There was a great profusion of sow's belly, and thrushes, and phænicopterus, and many of the dishes were deliciously prepared with honey. The liver of a goose, however, dressed with mulsus, milk, and fig, was the best dish I tasted. Yet it moved even my pity, to see a poor friend of the family to whom the good dishes were never offered: he had not even the good bread which was put to more favoured guests, and happening by chance to taste his wine, I found it execrable. The best part of his din-

ner consisted of a kind of bad crab. I wonder what should induce him to come. The conversation certainly could offer no inducement; it was in the usual stile of this great aristocracy, stately, correct, and dull. The dinner was as barren of ideas, as it was copious in dishes. At long pauses, and in short phrases, a few words were said upon these last; as, "This turbot is excellent."—"Very good indeed." "The wild venison is very well drest"—"I think it is."—Sometimes, too, a conversation of ten minutes took place upon jewels, which all the company understood; but the subjects which alone seemed to excite any interest, were wrestling and wine. I have acquired much information on these two subjects, and an indigestion.

I have been at another great dinner. There was a Greek who talked much and with great ingenuity. I thought it very pleasant; but after he was gone, every one said that he was very vulgar and impudent. It seems these Romans like nothing but sound sense, and that only in the Forum or the Senate. The hours of dinner they devote exclusively to eating, and think their sense of tasting will be less fine, if

they employ their attention on wit or anecdotes at the same time; perhaps they are right.

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I was present lately at an entertainment which promised very different fare from that which I have described above. It was a supper given by Lucan to Quintilian, Statius, Juvenal, and other wits. Lucan is very rich, and his supper was splendid; but for amusement, it afforded little. Every one seemed resolved not to speak unless he could shine, and the conversation fell entirely into the hands of Paulinus, who, being a great talker, did nothing but entertain us with an account of his journey to Baiæ, and the effects of the hot bath upon his own constitution. Telesinus, who sate next to me, said, in a low voice, “ If this man had travelled over Asia and Africa, and was now relating very curious things which he had seen and heard, he would excite the envy and hatred of the greater part of the company; but as he is a silly fellow, and only talks nonsense, no one disputes with him the place of orator of the table.”

Some one of the company was praising the

method of the rich men of Rome, of having a farm adjoining their villas ; on which a young man of the name of Tacitus said, “ Yes, it is an admirable custom ; it puts one in mind, at the same time, of the virtues of their ancestors and their own vices.”

Upon the whole, the day passed disagreeably. Quintilian was out of humour at being asked to meet Juvenal, and Statius was evidently revolving in his mind a comparison between the splendour of Lucan’s table, and the empty honour which his public recitations of the *Thebaid* produce. I asked each of the guests separately, his opinion of the *Pharsalia*, which seems to me to contain more fine passages and energetic thoughts, than any work of the day : such as the comparison between Cæsar and Pompey ; the passage of the soul of Pompey into those of Brutus and Cato, &c. &c.

(Here follow more than a dozen quotations.)

No one, however, was of my opinion. One said that Lucan was a very worthy man, but knew nothing of poetry ; another, that his taste was execrable ; a third, that all that was good in him was in the first half of the first

book; and a fourth whispered in my ear, that the story had been much better versified by a friend of his, whose poem had not been fairly read through by any one of his readers, but himself.

A FIRE.

Kal. Sextiles. — A fire has broken out which threatens to destroy this immense town. I was paying my respects to Flavius Sabinus, who was taking his exercise in a carriage under a covered portico, when an account was brought us, of a violent fire that was consuming some houses on the Cælian hill. He immediately threw himself from his carriage, and we both ran to the spot; for, as his house is at the back of the Cælian, he reasonably feared that it might be in danger. Upon arriving there, we found that the fire had begun in the Circus, and, catching some shops, had already been carried a great way by the wind. The narrow streets, and high houses, afford a great advantage to the flames. It was curious to see the people who came out of these filthy habitations; many of them seemed not to have

seen the light of day for years ; their clothes grew as it were to their skin, and their limbs, unused to the weight of their bodies, scarcely supported them ; they turned their hollow eyes on every side, as if uncertain where they were and what had happened to them : yet I observed that when they recovered their senses, they were much more anxious about their rotten moveables, than the senators for the safety of their tables of gold and silver. But the very poor had a more pressing care. Multitudes were deprived on a sudden of their only means of subsistence ; and some, despairing of succour, threw themselves again into the flames from which they had been rescued. The streets were filled with children crying for their parents, and old men blind and helpless from age. Most of these either mistaking the way by which they could escape, were surrounded and devoured by the flames, or overthrown and trampled upon by a mob of ruffians, who were searching for plunder. An old woman of some fortune, was entirely deserted by her slaves in the beginning of the tumult : she loaded

herself with gold, and had already passed the fire, when she was knocked down by some of a gang of plunderers. I saw one of them, after she had been stripped, throw her back into the flames. In another part, a slave devoted his life to save the child of his master; he threw him into his mother's arms, and, overcome with the torture of his wound, ran himself upon a sword. No aid was brought to quench the flames. The soldiers of the city guard ran about disguised with the mob, and partook of the spoils. At intervals these wretches gave a shout, as it were, of encouragement, which formed a contrast with the cries of women and children. When the fire reached a great palace, the clamour was redoubled, and some of the most unpopular patricians, so far from getting aid against the fire, had the misery of seeing lighted torches thrown into their houses. They themselves fled in different directions out of the town. Yet, in the midst of all the clamour, as I was passing through a quarter of the town remote from the fire, I saw the people lying in the sun, and eating

their fried fish as if nothing had happened ; — perhaps, to-morrow the same calamity will reach their own dwellings.

Upon the whole, it was the most amusing day I have passed in Rome.

15. *Idus*. Nero came in from Antium just as his own palace was taking fire ; he has ordered his gardens to be thrown open to the people, and temporary buildings to be erected. He has even sent for furniture from Ostia, and lowered the price of bread to a mere trifle : yet an absurd rumour has spread amongst the people, that he played the “Fire of Troy,” whilst his own town was meeting the same fate.

23. It is now said that Nero set fire to the city himself ; he has taken a prompt and decisive resolution. “It is necessary,” he said to his freedman, “to dispel this rumour, and convince the people that I am ready to punish. The idle opinion they have taken up, must be refuted by a great and public measure. Let the Christians be condemned and put to death immediately.”

24. The order of the Emperor has been fully executed ; I went to-day to glad my eyes with the

sight. It was diverting to see some of the victims shut up in the skins of wild beasts, pursued by dogs, and torn to pieces ; others were crucified, and I told them, as they groaned with pain, that they ought to be satisfied, since they were treated in the same manner as their God. As the night approached, fires were kindled, and a number of them thrown into the flames. The people do not consider them as guilty, and they are looked on with compassion ; but as it was a dark night, and the fires were very splendid, a great multitude attended the spectacle. I alone beheld their sufferings with real delight. I did not lose one of their cries, nor pass unobserved one of their contortions ; and when their bones were consumed, I scattered them in the air, that none might preserve their remains. Nero was there, and mixed in the crowd in the disguise of a coachman.

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It is astonishing to see the rapid and magnificent creation of the new city. Of the fourteen quarters into which old Rome was divided, three were burnt to the ground, and seven more reduced to ruins. Nero has shown

no small degree of judgment in his directions for rebuilding the town. Each house is separate and independent, forming what is called an island. For every house built within a certain time, of a kind of stone which is not affected by fire, like the common tufo, the Emperor grants a premium. He also engages to build the porticoes in front of every house, from his own funds : add to this, that the streets are broad, that each house has a yard, and that water is brought to fixed places for the convenience of extinguishing fires.

So much for the public ; but Nero has not been less careful for, or less generous to himself. He has built an immense palace, which contains every luxury that a fertile imagination could suggest to a sensual disposition. Gold, and silver, and ivory, are the common materials of the furniture. The columns of marble from Alexandria, are, through a wantonness of decoration, incrustated with marble from Numidia. The ceilings of the supper-rooms change with every service, now exhibiting a face of glass, and now of painting. But one is still more surprised on going into the garden. Three of

the seven hills of Rome are devoted to this purpose. Here the trees are so planted as to form in a short time an impenetrable shade; there the ground is left open, and leaves a long prospect of lakes, meadows, and temples. In some parts are confined the beasts of the three quarters of the globe; in others the various plumage of a thousand birds delight and dazzle the eyes. The magnificence of the baths is indescribable. Even those in the city, built for the use of the people, are adorned with silver spouts, and enjoy the convenience of a grove, and a circus. I saw a common fellow, who had probably been active in the fire, lounge out of the bath with this exclamation: "Some praise Romulus, for building the city; and some praise Augustus for beautifying it; but I say, Long live Nero for burning it."

HAPPINESS.

As a spectator of life, I am often led to observe what makes men happy, whilst they who are playing the game, seem scarcely ever to reflect on the causes of their pleasures and pains.

It appears to me, that if men were to consult rationally their own interests, their pursuits

would always tend to something positive and fixed. For I have observed, that those who follow diligently a trade or a science, the results of which can be weighed and measured, are generally men of cheerful disposition and unreserved conversation; whilst those whose hearts are fixed upon the esteem of society, or public reputation, are, for the most part, infected with gloom in their solitude, and jealousy in their commerce with the world. An instance of this has occurred in my own street:—Publius Virginius kept one of the smallest wine-shops in Rome, and was long in a state of great poverty: to make matters worse, as his neighbours thought, he had married early in life; but this circumstance, though it narrowed his means, quickened his industry. By great care and frugality he accumulated a small sum of money, with which he bought a larger shop, and laid in a stock of better wine. His house acquired great custom, partly from the merit of the owner, but more from the superior excellence of his commodity. Step by step he bought a vineyard, a villa, and, finally, a palace in Rome. This man was never seen to be out of spirits:

in the worst days of his poverty he always said he knew what his best efforts could do, and was willing and able to do it; nor did he ever sink under the event of untoward fortune: he reckoned, justly, perhaps, that prudence must in time gain the victory over chance.

His son Quintus is a very different man. Inheriting from his father a large property, he endeavoured, as much as possible, to forget the obligation. He would fain have had it believed, that the person to whose skill and talents he was indebted for an independent fortune, was not the same Publius to whom he owed his life and education, but some remote ancestor, of whose history he knew nothing. Not only did he show a want of gratitude and right feeling by this behaviour, but exposed himself to general ridicule: it is become a matter of diversion for all the idle patricians, to remark the efforts he makes to push himself into their society. In the forum, he is always squeezing up to a judge, and whispering in his ear some trifling piece of news. He returns to his house with a greater number of clients, and is more generous in the distribution of the *sportula*, than

any one. His suppers are the most sumptuous in Rome, and are attended by persons of the greatest eminence, both for rank and talent. Yet he is never satisfied with his situation. If he can find nobody to play at the *palla* with him, he thinks it is because he is the son of a victualler. If Petronius Arbiter gives a supper to which he is not invited, he thinks he is losing ground in the world. If Gordian has theatricals at his villa, and he is not one of the company, he supposes that there is an inner circle of patrician society, infinitely more select, more refined, and more agreeable than that in which he moves, from which he shall always be excluded. Hence, his life is a series of little vexations, and useless miseries : his invention is always on the rack to find a motive for discontent, and the slightest word of raillery is sufficient to poison the purest of his joys, and outweigh a solid year of ostentatious parade.

I have made the same remark in contrasting those who seek for fame as poets, and those who seek for truth as men of science. The poet, prowling in public libraries, and collecting the breath of every blockhead who has a

tongue, is mortified with the slightest hint of censure, and trembles at the touch of a critic's pen. His whole wealth is in praise, and a single word, the jest of a dinner, or the nonsense of an idle party, levels him at once from the highest prosperity to the utmost poverty. He is always the —

*Luctantem Icariis fluctibus Africum
Mercator metuens.*

But the mathematician, or astronomical observer, has his object before him, and when he ascertains the truth, he finds a treasure of which the world cannot rob him. He has all the eagerness of pursuit, all the pleasure of discovery; and he can enjoy alone and unseen, the solution of a problem, which nature seemed to have reserved as a secret for her wisest sons. Even in fame he has a security, whilst men of letters have only a chance, of immortality. The laurels of the poet whom the age celebrates, may in another century fade and fall from his head; but the labours of the man of science form part of a pyramid, connected below with

the rudest discoveries of shepherd nations, and supporting above the sublime apex which the course of ages and the appearance of a Newton, are necessary to complete.

* * * * *

A battle has just taken place under the walls, between the army of Vitellius, and that of Vespasian. The people went out to see it as an amusing sight, and applauded each party alternately as they prevailed. The city was taken, but notwithstanding the savage horrors of the scene, and the smoke which yet rises from the ashes of the capitol, the inhabitants follow their occupations and even their amusements as usual.* There has at no time existed more licentiousness and debauchery. The baths, and the theatres, are all open; I never expected to see man arrive to such a pitch of magnanimity. This rabble practise the best parts of the Stoic and Epicurean philosophy: they are Stoics in disregarding evil, and Epicureans in enjoying pleasure.

* * * * *

Nonæ Octo — I have been to pass a few days at the Tuscan villa of Pliny the younger. It is in a

* Tac. H. l. 5. 85.

pretty situation, with a very fine view of the Apennines. As I approached it, I thought the house beautiful, as it is all covered with vines, which grow entirely over the roof: add to this a very pretty fountain playing in the court, and marble seats disposed here and there as convenience requires it; I imagined I had at last escaped from the kingdom of splendour, to that of taste. But on approaching the house I saw, to my sorrow, the box cut in the shapes of beasts and birds, besides being occasionally carved out into the letters of the owner's name. However, the general arrangement is both pretty and convenient.

Pliny's way of life is singular, but not irrational. In the morning he meditates in bed, and dictates to a secretary. At this time, no doubt, the thoughts are the clearest, though perhaps not always the most vigorous. It is when a man has been braced by air, and refreshed by food, that his mind is most capable of receiving, and emitting powerful ideas. But, to continue — about ten o'clock we meet Pliny in the *scystus* or *cryptoporticus*; he then gets into his carriage, and returns to take a short sleep; after this, he walks, and recites a Latin

or Greek oration, for the sake of digestion. Exercise and the bath follow, and then to supper about four o'clock. During supper a book is read, and afterwards a *comœdus* or *lyristes* heard. We then walk again; and this is the hour for learned or familiar discussion. It is a proof of what I before remarked, that Pliny's conversation at this time is raised to a tone far above that which he attains in the compositions at which he labours in the morning. These are often puerile and tiresome; exquisite in style but trite in matter. For instance, there is nothing at which he labours more than his familiar letters. The other day he read us one in which he asked the advice of his friend Pompeius Saturninus, about the publication of an oration he had made when he gave his library to his townsmen. He gives invincible reasons, in my opinion, for not making public a long discourse upon his own munificence, and tells his friend how much more the reward of virtue consists in conscience, than in fame.* Yet he ends the whole with an implicit deference to his friend's judgment,

* Lib. 1. c. 8.

which can only imply, that he wants a sanction to his vanity, which his own reason cannot afford him. Indeed, he is a great coxcomb; he never does a generous thing, without turning a pretty phrase, and all his words and actions, seem to be prepared as rough notes for a panegyric on himself. Yet he is, after all, a worthy man, and I like him for this, that he does not give his freedmen bad wine, as a great man I mentioned before; but the same that he drinks himself. Besides, he never has his slaves bound, and permits them to make wills in favour of any they please in the house; saying, very truly, that the house in which they serve, is their country and commonwealth.

Upon returning to Rome, I found a book had appeared, which has long been anxiously expected, — a history by Tacitus, beginning from the time of Galba. Pliny told me, a long time ago, that Tacitus had asked him to undertake this history, but that he had requested, and at length prevailed upon Tacitus to do it himself. The appearance of the work has made a great sensation; and every one seems to be violent, either for or against Tacitus, except his friends. They say that they are greatly

disappointed; that his style falls off very much from that of the *Life of Agricola*, and of his essay *De Moribus Germanorum*; that the form is neither that of a history, nor a treatise; that he has omitted what was most curious in the lives and manners of the emperors, and made unintelligible that which he has told; and that it is clear, from the whole result, that he has over-rated his talents, in supposing he could write a work which would go down to posterity. One of his particular friends, who whispered this last remark in my ear, added, "For my part, I am very sorry for it; I think Cornelius a man of very great talents for a short speech in the senate, or a sharp saying on the forum, and if he would take my advice, he would never take a pen in his hand." His enemies, on the contrary, are all enraged at the success of his book. His undisguised contempt for vice, whether it shines in purple, or skulks in rags; his impartial estimate of the talents and achievements of the men, who have made a figure on the theatre of the world; his powerful analysis of the moral qualities of a selfish nobility, and a degraded people, have excited in the breasts of many, an animosity which is only more violent from not

being entirely avowed. Many had hoped that he would have aimed all the arrows in his quiver, at the monsters who have governed the empire: but they were not aware that a genius so profound, must soon discover the great political truth, that the vices of rulers are but the counterpart of the vices of the people governed. There must be cowardice and meanness in a nation which long submits to the authority of cruelty and corruption. Thus we soon find Cornelius Tacitus, describing his countrymen, as “*Homines qui nec totam servitutem, nec totam libertatem pati possunt.*” And, presently, we have not only the people, but many of the knights and senators condemned by the following sentence: “*Ignavissimus quisque, et ut res docuit in periculo non ausurus, nimii verbis, lingua feroces; nemo scire, et omnes adfirmare: donec inopiâ veri et consensu errantium victus, sumpto thorace, Galba, &c.* And a few hours afterwards, when victory had declared for Otho,—“*Alium crederes senatum, alium populum, ruere cuncti in castra, anteire proximos, certare cum præcurrentibus, increpare Galbam, laudare militum judicium, exosculari Othonis manum, quantoque magis falsa erant quæ fiebant,*

tantò plura facere." For my own part, I esteem the history of Tacitus, as one of the greatest productions of the human mind. Every event which he draws rude from the pages of annalists and chroniclers, becomes in his hands an instructive lecture on human character; and a thousand insignificant details are refined into one short sentence, as much greater in value as it is less in bulk than his original. Some, nay many, faults are to be found. The historian is too indignant with vice, to enter into details which to future ages might be matter of useful speculation; and he works so much at a story as often to cut away the whole narrative, and leave nothing but the moral. But his great defect is his style. By dint of studying the ancients, and abhorring the moderns, he has got an artificial and ambitious manner of writing. That energy which Brutus and Scipio displayed in action, he endeavours to throw into metaphors, and antitheses; and the puerile conceits of Seneca, and the orators of the day, have been changed by him into strong but fallacious epigrams. This taste has led him at last to make an antithesis, where

nothing but a plain fact was required. What can be more useless, and indeed more false, than the following turn? “*Servius Galba iterum, P. Vinus consules inchoavére annum sibi ultimum, reipublicæ prope supremum.*” His brevity is also very often affected: thus, having described the beginning of an insurrection, and the sending of an army against the insurgents, he drops the curtain with these words: “*Viso milit- quies.*”

They say he is writing another history which is to begin from the death of Augustus.

* * * * *

I promised Pliny, to make, one day, a journal of all that I should do from the hour I rose, to that at which I went to bed. Yesterday he required of me to perform my promise; and here it is: — Six o'clock *: Got up * *

* * * * *

Went to attend the levee of Virginius Rufus: a great many people there; he received us

* These hours are modern and not Roman. There have evidently been erasures and corrections in the MSS. Ed.

very politely; they say he will again be consul: Marcellus, who always used to speak ill of him, has written a panegyric upon him.

Eight: — Went to the forum, by the side of the litter of Virginius; heard an uninteresting cause; lounged about in the Forum amongst the newsmongers. A report that the equestrian order are to be deprived of the government of Egypt: certainly no body of men forming the subjects of a sovereign, were ever, before themselves, the sovereigns of a great country; besides, the knights being in fact merchants, govern ignorantly and selfishly. Heard a good story of Regulus: he went to attend Aurelia upon the occasion of her signing her will: he found her drest in some very magnificent tunics; they pleased his fancy so much, that he insisted upon her altering her will, to leave him these tunics as a legacy. She complied, but was so ill-natured as to get well. What she will think of his affection for her person, when she reflects upon his conduct at that critical time, is very doubtful.

Twelve o'clock: — Those about me ran away in all directions, following some great man or

other, in order to get the *sportula*. I went home to dinner; tried to settle with my host an old account I have with him; but he declared, that at twelve the business of the day was over.

One o'clock: — Walked under the covered portico of Nerva; many senators there in litters, taking their sedentary exercise. Tired of this gouty company, went to the Campus Martius; saw the young men shooting with arrows, riding and playing at tennis; — played for an hour.

Three o'clock: — Went to the bath; heard a poet declaiming: he made so much noise that Silius Italicus said, he had a mind to perform a miracle; and as Amphion had brought the stones together, this poet was endeavouring to separate them; in fact he made a bawling which seemed as if it would crack the building.

Four o'clock: — Having put on my supper garment, went to sup with Apicius, who is worthy of his two namesakes. He had a red mullet of two pounds, which cost 4200 sesterii (525 francs), and wine of two or three hundred years old, which cost 768 sesterii an ounce.

Amongst the guests, was an ill-looking fellow from Tibur. He took away the garment which Apicius gave him *; and, not content with sending several dishes away from table to his wife and children, loaded himself with every thing that was served, from the eggs to the apples. I believe, also, I owe to him the loss of my napkin, which my slave could no where find to take back.

Between the courses, we played at dice, and set to seriously as soon as supper was over. I like play better than music: the latter soothes the conscience for a moment; but the sting soon returns; the latter drives it out, and fills its place with less racking emotion. Apicius sent us away with rich presents.

* * * * *

Nothing can be more absurd than the praises which are lavished on the judgment of Virgil. The critic, having praised the invention of Homer, wished to say something of Virgil by way of antithesis. Had he said the execution of Virgil, the point would have been as good and

* Each guest was presented with a robe.

the sense much better. Some critics too, have found out that great art is shown in calling Æneas Dux Trojanus *, when he goes into the cave with Dido. But this is very weak, for it would have been burlesque to say “the pious Æneas and Dido went into a cave together.” And, with regard to propriety, what shall we say to Æneas’s character of himself? —

“*Sum pius Æneas, raptos qui ex hoste Penates,
Classe veho mecum famâ super æthera notus.*”

And now let me say a few words on the character of Æneas, who is, in fact, the subject of the whole work. He is the hero of the poem, and with his Trojans, not one of whom, except himself, is the least remarkable, is the only point of connection between the first and the second part of the story. Yet, with this, he is not only not interesting, but excites positive disgust. He arrives at Carthage, where he is received with the most cordial hospitality by the queen; he

* The remark, which is made by Sir R. Steele, in the Tatler, seems to have been anticipated by some Roman critics.

tells her a very long tale of the destruction of Troy, in the course of which, he very much praises his own valour, and tells how he brought away his father, and left his wife to the flames. He then seduces poor Dido, and immediately abandons her: this is said to be ordained by the gods; which, however, is no excuse for Virgil, who governs the gods as well as others. But allowing the gods told him to repay the queen's hospitality, by violating her person, and driving her to commit suicide; they did not oblige him to enjoy a quiet sleep on board a ship the very night on which he left her.

*Æneas celsâ in puppi, jam certus eundi
Carpebat somnos, rebus jam rite paratis.*

After some insignificant events, he arrives in Italy, where he deprives Turnus, a native, of the hand of Lavinia, and wages an unjust war, to establish himself in a country where he has no right to set his foot. Then, as for the courage he shows in the war, he fights on every occasion, except one, in impenetrable armour. Had Horace, or any other notorious coward, possessed a shield which saved his person

from all danger, he certainly would not have run away. The barbarity with which the hero treats his enemies, although copied from Homer, is very unsuitable to the *pious Æneas*, and the feelings of the age of Augustus. What can we think of a hero who offers up one enemy as a human sacrifice; who taunts another in the most brutal way, whilst he kills him; and who refuses to spare another who is a suppliant?

The character of Æneas by no means comprehends all the faults of judgment into which Virgil has fallen. There never was a greater sinking, than to carry us from the magnificent story of burning Troy, and the unequalled description of the shades below, to the insignificant intrigues and wars of some petty chieftains in Italy. And by way of incidents, what can be more flat than Ascanius calling his cake a table, and the ships being all turned into nymphs?

Virgil's similies are rather too much like one another. In the ninth book, Evander is like a lion: a little after Turnus is a lion; and in the tenth book Turnus is a lion again. In the twelfth book he is a bull. The images

are also sometimes low : Turnus is compared to a kettle boiling over ; and Æneas setting fire to the capital of his enemy, is like a country-man fumigating a bee-hive.

If I were to analyze the story, many more faults of judgment might be found ; but the diction and the poetry are so perfect, that I have no inclination to touch it farther. The foliage and the flowers so bewilder and delight my senses, that I do not dare to prune the branches, which, in fact, injure the beauty of the plant.

* * * * *

In looking at the state of Rome, I find ample room for the enjoyment of my favourite passion of contempt. In fact, the Romans are nothing more than barbarians who have taken a rich city, and are rioting in the spoils. They are at once savage and effeminate, and have lost all the virtues of their old condition, without acquiring much of the polish of their new situation. Look at their coliseum and their baths, their arches on the top of columns, and their pilasters running up the sides of their arches ! What sculptors have they, who do not come from Greece ? What poetry and what eloquence

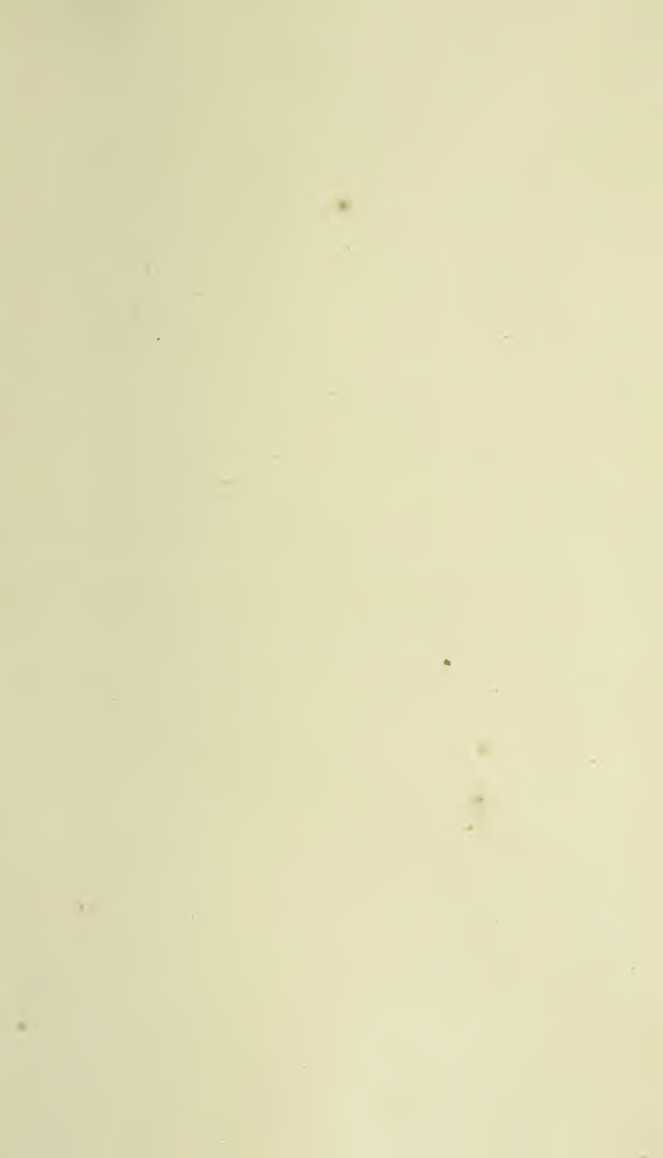
have they which is not copied from the Greeks? Where are their mathematicians, their inventors, their philosophers? their Euclid, their Archimedes, their Aristotle, their Plato? Their luxury is savage and insatiable gluttony; their refinement odious and disgusting vice.

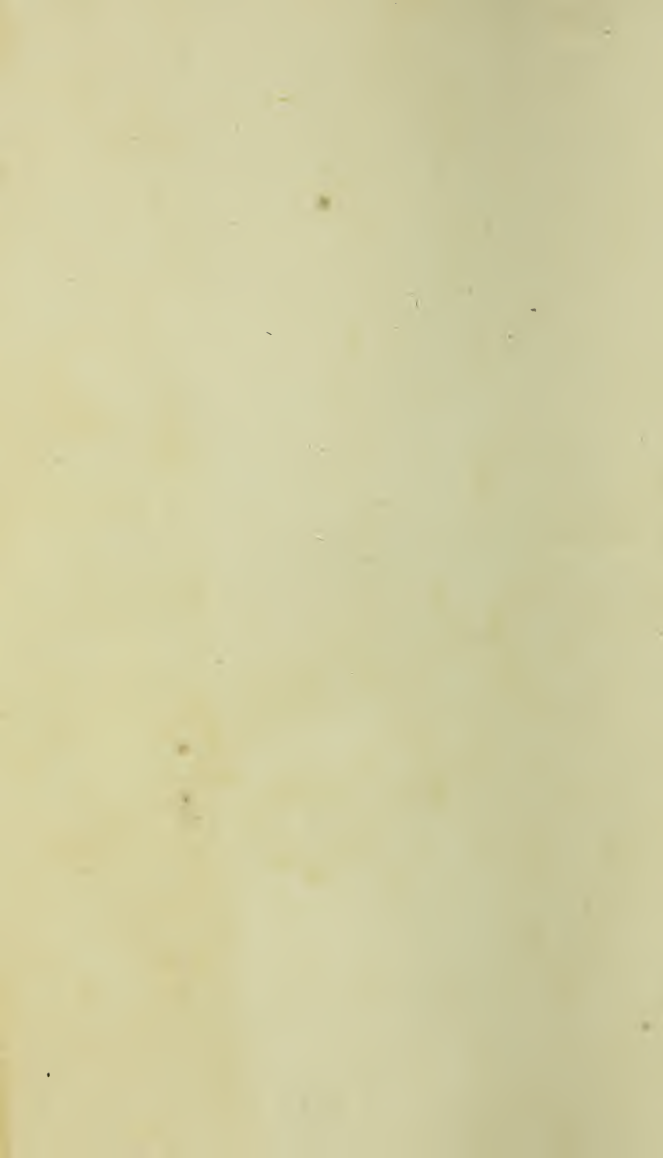
What will become of them? They still have the advantage of discipline over the neighbours who surround them. Perhaps those neighbours will, in time, attain a certain degree of knowledge, without losing their old barbarous virtues, and then declare themselves independent: at all events, the civilisation of the globe seems to be secured for ever.

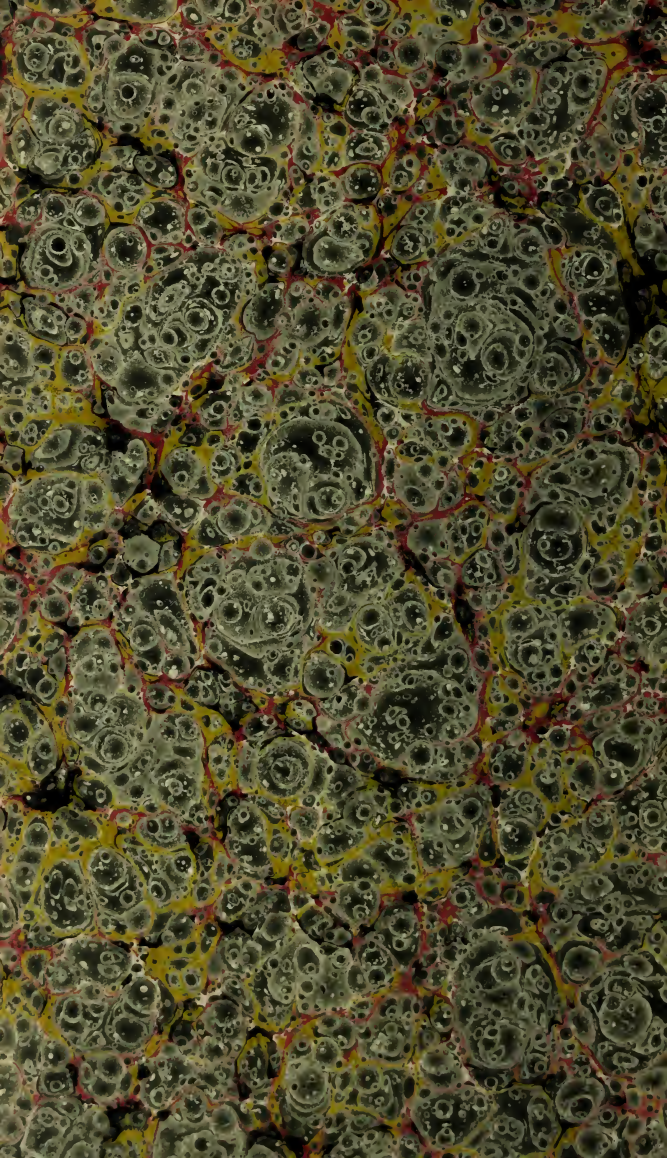
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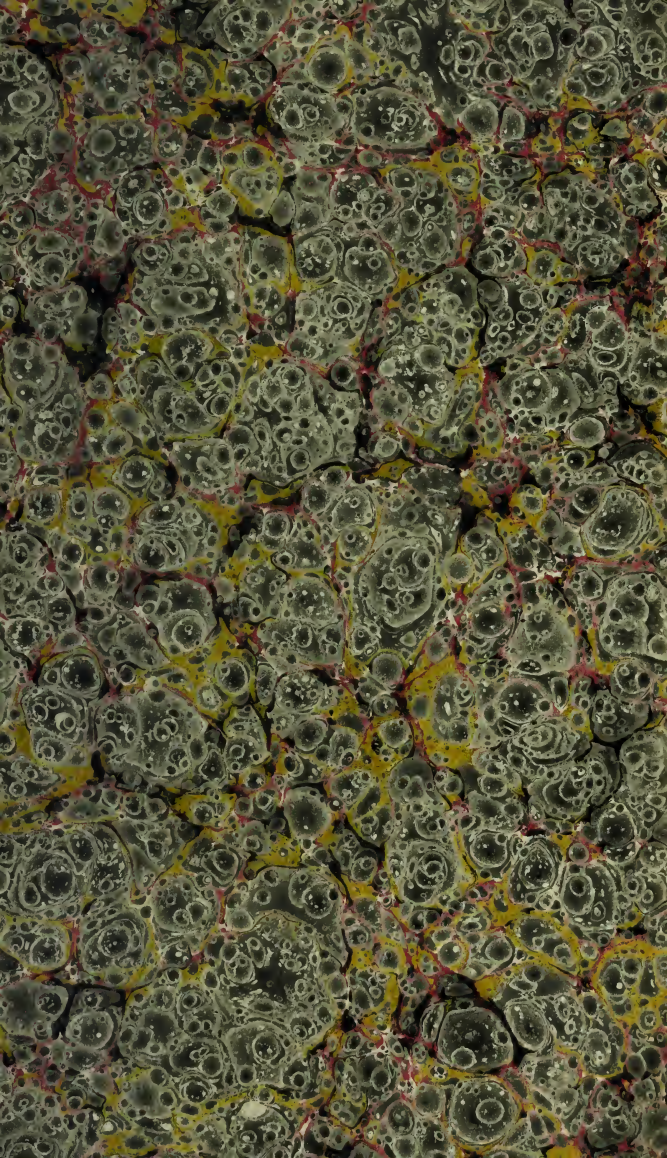
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THE END.









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